

The Epics and Sans of Ancient India

CONDENSED *into* ENGLISH VERSE

BY

ROMESH C. DUTT, C.I.E.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE RIGHT HON. F. MAX MÜLLER

Copyright by
The Eastern Book House
Calcutta
NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND
NOT SALABLE.

R. P. MITRA

PRINTER, PUBLISHER, AND BOOKSELLER

29, Beadon Street, Calcutta.

1903.



63522 / 12
RATH CENTRAL LIBRARY
WEST BENGAL
CALCUTTA.

17878

Kannatharathil Sen
Kannathar Sen's Garden La.
Calcutta 1906.

INTRODUCTION

WE possess but very little of true Epic Poetry, and the wonder is that we should possess any. Of course if we define an epic as a poem which in the form of continuous narrative celebrates the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition, any poet may write an epos. But if by epos are meant early unwritten narrative poems celebrating incidents of heroic tradition, we can easily understand why their number should be so small as it is. Strictly speaking, I know of one true epic poem only, the Kalewala of the Fins, and possibly the Kalewipoeg of the Estonians. These were preserved to the present day, and are still living in the mouths of the people. They were never written down till they were lately collected and fitted together, without any additions, by such men as Von Becker, Lonnrot, Castren, and others. Lonnrot's first edition of the Kalewala in Finnish appeared in 1835, comprising about 12,000 verses in thirty-two songs. This was translated into Swedish by Castren in 1841. In 1849, however, Lonnrot published a new edition, consisting of 22,793 verses in fifty songs, and a German translation by Schiefner appeared in 1857. More songs even, all forming integral parts of a large epic poem, have been discovered since the death of Castren and Lonnrot. While we may perfectly trust the painstaking scholarship and conscientious accuracy of Castren, Lonnrot, and other Finnish students in their treatment of these ancient popular poems of Finland, some doubt has been thrown on the perfect authenticity of the Estonian poems of Kalewipoeg as collected by Kreutzwald and translated into German by

Reinthal, 1857. They were found to be in a much more fragmentary state, and it is supposed that they were largely restored, while in the case of the *Kalewala* we possess the trustworthy copy of poems exactly as they were, and are still recited in Finland by old men and women in the presence of their Swedish auditors.

All other epic poems, after existing for an unknown length of time in the tradition of popular poets, have passed through what is called a *Diaskeue*, a setting in order, a dressing or recension at the hands of later poets. The most perfect specimen of this kind of epic poetry exists in the two Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. How the component parts of these poems, such as the *Cyclopeia*, the story of the wooden horse at Troy, the *Nekyia*, the *Doloneia*, the *Patrokleia*, &c., had existed before they formed part of an *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, we can see in the case of *Demodokos* and other *Aoidoi* who sang these *Aristeias* at festivals, both public and private. But we have no trustworthy information as to how these poems came to be collected, whether their dialect and metre were changed, in the schools of the *Homeridæ*, and at what time the first written copies of them were prepared and circulated. I doubt whether in Greece the very idea of a written literature existed much before 500 or 600 B. C., that is, before the first contact between West and East. There is the Greek alphabet, which tells us in the clearest way that the Greeks learnt their letters from the Phœnicians; but there is a long distance between a knowledge of the A B C and its employment for inscriptions, coins, and even for official treaties, and its use for literary purposes. I confess that the well-known passage at the end of the *Phædrus* gives me the impression as if even Plato had still a recollection of the time when literature was mnemonic only, and not yet written.

And if we look at the epic literature of other nations, we

INTRODUCTION

And much the same. The poem of the Nibelunge, such as we possess it, was composed and written down about A. D. 1200; but we see from the short ballads recording the fates of Sigurd and Brynhild, as preserved to us in the Edda, what the poems may have been like which were used as his materials by the unknown German Homer of the twelfth century.

Firdusi, the author of the Persian national epic, the Shah Nameh, Book of Kings, about A. D. 1000, tells us himself what sources he consulted, and how he travelled about from village to village to collect the materials for his great poem.

We see, therefore, that the constituent elements of the epic poems which we possess—the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Nibelunge, and the Shah Nameh—existed in oral tradition long before the invention of writing; that they were elaborated during what is called the Mnemonic Period of literature; and that they were reduced to their present form at a time when the art of alphabetic writing had been discovered, and had been applied, not only to inscriptions, but to poetry and other literary compositions; when, in fact, there were not only a few sculptors to engrave official documents, but a large public that could both read and write.

We must distinguish, therefore, between two kinds of epic poetry—one, the *Mnemonic*, as preserved intact in the Kalewala, and slightly recast in the Kalewipoeg; another, the *Literary*, which has passed through the hands of later poets, such as Iliad and Odyssey, the Nibelungenlied, and the Shah Nameh. There is a third class of purely *Artificial* epic poems, written in imitation of these models, such as Virgil's *Æneid*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the *Lusiads* of Camoens, and, lastly, poems like Voltaire's *Henriade*. But these belong to quite a different sphere of poetry.

It is not likely that the number of true epic poems will ever be increased, and the discovery of two epic poems in

India was therefore a great event in the comparative study of ancient literature. These two Sanskrit poems were the **Mahabharata** and the **Ramayana**. Leaving here out of consideration the **Ramayana**, the author of which, Valmiki, seems to have been more than a mere *Diaskeuastes*, we have the **Mahabharata**, an ancient Sanskrit poem, which, in its present form, is said to consist of no less than 90,000 couplets, and was published at Calcutta in 1834-39 in four large quarto volumes. In its present form it can hardly be called a poem. It is an enormous poetical treasury, in which everything was thrown that could possibly be brought into connection with its original story. At first the **Mahabharata** was the story of the Great War that had been waged in ancient times in India, but after the popular songs about that "Eighteen Days' War" had been collected, not only ancient stories, but ancient laws, customs, philosophies were all incorporated into it. The date of its first composition is, of course, unknown, as much as the age of the single *Aristeias* of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, or of the various *Kvidhas* of the *Edda*. All we can say is, that a collected poem, called not only *Bharata*, but **Mahabharata**, *i.e.* the great story of the war of the *Bharatas*, is mentioned clearly in the *Asvalayana Sutrās*, that is, before the rise of Buddhism in the sixth century B. C. But what the **Mahabharata** was then, we shall of course never know. All we can say is that, when first collected, it must have been a mnemonic poem, composed before the art of writing was known in India, or, at all events, before it had been applied to literary purposes in that country. Extraordinary as it may seem to us that so enormous a poem should have been composed and handed down by memory only, the fact itself can hardly be doubted. It is in India, of all countries in the world, where we must study the facts about the extraordinary, and to us almost incredible, powers of memory, before the art

of writing was known and practised. There is, no doubt, an introductory chapter of our poem which tells us how, with the help of Ganesa, the Mahabharata was written. But the absence of that chapter in a large number of MSS., more particularly, as Dr. Winternitz has shown, in the MSS. of the south of India, speaks for itself, and proves that the idea of the poem* having been composed on paper was an after-thought, and may, in fact, serve to determine the time when writing for literary purposes became the custom in India. The poet is called Vyasa, or Krishna Dvaipayana, a name which means "arranger," from *vi* and *as*, to distribute, to extend; and whatever his date may have been, we may be certain that his work, the Mahabharata, was a genuine product of the Mnemonic Period of Indian literature.

Life seems too short to read such a gigantic poem as a whole, and various attempts have been made from time to time to reduce it to its original dimensions. The most promising was to follow the indications of an old Index or Anukramanika, incorporated in the poem itself. But if we add the number of couplets of each book, as stated in that preface, we are still left with a poem of no less than 85,000 couplets. It is impossible to enjoy such a poem, however beautiful it may be in some of its stories; nor can we imagine that the original poet, or the original collector even, contemplated such a monstrous production. The original subject was the war between two branches of the same royal family, the Bharata princes. These Bharatas are mentioned as an ancient and most powerful race in the north of India as early as the Brahmana period, for in the Satapathabrahmana, xiii. 5, 4, we read, "The greatness of the Bharatas neither the men before nor those after them have ever attained; nor did the seven tribes of men, even as mortal man does not touch the sky with his flanks."

It is easy to see how round the nucleus of this war an immense mass of poetry, both popular and artificial, was accumulated, but it was not so easy a task to sift this enormous mass, and to extract from it what may have been the original story. This task has been boldly undertaken and carried through, as far as I can judge, with great success by Mr. Romesh Dutt in his "Mahabharata condensed into English Verse." He has himself given an account of the principles by which he was guided in his work. He has, as much as possible, taken a number of verses of the original and rendered them faithfully into English. He has left out on the very largest scale, but he has not added ; and the impression which his bold undertaking leaves on the reader is certainly that something like what we here read in English may have been recited in India when the war between the Kurus and the sons of Pandu was first sung by the ancient bards of the country. If Vyasa, the collector, was in any sense the author of some parts of the poem, it is important to observe that in the poem itself he is represented as the kinsman, though under peculiar circumstances, of the royal family of the Bharatas.

Mr. Romesh Dutt tells us that without exaggeration two hundred millions of Hindus cherish to the present day the story of their ancient epics. "The Hindu," he writes, "scarcely lives, man or woman, high or low, educated or ignorant, whose earliest recollections do not cling round the story and the characters of the Mahabharata," listening to it either in the original, or to a translation into one of the many vernaculars. Considering how many people there are now in India who know English better than Sanskrit, there can be little doubt that this English translation and condensation by Mr. Romesh Dutt will be most welcome to his own compatriots. It will be equally welcome to many English students of literature who wish to gain an idea of that wonderful epic. The original, in

its colossal bulk, can be consulted by Sanskrit scholars only. It is true it has been translated from beginning to end into English by my late friend Protap Chandra Roy and his assistants, but even that translation will hardly meet with many patient readers in England. To the student of Sanskrit literature the Mahabharata, so far as it reflects the ancient life of India, will always remain an invaluable treasury. Quite apart from the story of the ancient heroic war, the great bulk of the later accretions also is full of interest and instruction. Of course there exists always one great difficulty ; we cannot tell which period of Indian history is represented to us in each of its various component parts. Every race in the north, the south, the east, and west of India wished to see some account of its own heroes inserted in the national epic. Philosophers claimed some mention of their doctrines as a proof of their antiquity, and as a kind of brief of nobility. Moral and legal authorities clamoured naturally for the same mention ; and even mere customs, rules about caste, marriage, and inheritance had to be placed under the shield of the ancient epic. The geography, the ethnology, the migrations of races in India, all may be studied in the Mahabharata. The dominating religious cult, not at the time of the Great War itself, but at the time of the final redaction of the poem, was clearly the worship of *Kṛishna*, and this is generally referred to a time after the disappearance of Buddhism from the soil of India, so that the final redaction of the epic can hardly be placed before the Renaissance period of Indian literature, that is, before the fourth century A.D. But much of this is still uncertain, and we must carefully guard against premature and positive assertions when we treat of the chronology of Indian literature, and of its epic literature in particular. Every generation of scholars builds up its own system of chronology, and the next generation pulls it down

again. Unfortunately there are no ancient temples, or palaces, or works of art in India to serve as guides. The very idea of stone buildings does not go back beyond the time of the invasion of India by Alexander. The most ancient stone buildings are the buildings dating from Asoka's time in the third century, and though many of them contain relics in the shape of jewels and gold ornaments, they have not yielded as yet any real works of art, not even weapons, or armour, or warlike ornaments. The Mahabharata tells us of weapons, which remind us of some of the weapons found by Schliemann at Mycenæ. We find descriptions of golden bosses on the wood of a bow, tipped with gold at either end, and of golden insects worked on the staff of another bow. We read of brilliant suns on other weapons, and of golden fireflies glinting in the yellow light of day. A sword is called toad-engraven, and all these things seem to testify to an early cultivation of arts and crafts of which no remnants have survived. Again, we read of mimes and actors, and of bards reciting ancient songs; but of the poems themselves which they recited, or of the plays which they acted, nothing remains to us, not even their names and titles.

As a mine of information the Mahabharata is inexhaustible, and will for a long time remain unexhausted. We are all the more grateful to Mr. Romesh Dutt for having given us a kind of photographic representation, a snap-shot, as it were, of the old poem—the longest poem, I believe, in the whole world—and having enabled students of literature to form for themselves some kind of idea of what our Aryan brothers in India admired and still admire in the epic poetry of their country.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

OXFORD, *January* 1899.

Manmathanath Sm.

MAHA-BHARATA
EPIC OF THE BHARATAS

•
TO

THE MARQUIS OF RIPON

EVER GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED BY MY COUNTRYMEN FOR HIS
JUST AND BENEVOLENT ADMINISTRATION AND FOR HIS
GENEROUS AND HELPFUL MEASURES FOR THE
INTRODUCTION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT
IN INDIA

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE MAHA-BHARATA

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

•

CONTENTS.

MAHABHARATA.

<i>Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. ASTRA DARSANA (THE TOURNAMENT)	I
II. SWAYAMVARA (THE BRIDE'S CHOICE)	14
III. RAJASUYA (THE IMPERIAL SACRIFICE)	28
IV. DYUTA (THE FATAL DICE)	42
V. PATIVRATA-MAHATMA (WOMAN'S LOVE)	55
VI. GO-HARANA (CATTLE-LIFTING)	73
VII. UDYOGA (THE COUNCIL OF WAR)	87
VIII. BHISMA-BADHA (FALL OF BHISHMA)	100
IX. DRONA-BADHA (FALL OF DRONA)	119
X. KARNA-BADHA (FALL OF KARNA)	136
XI. SRADHA (FUNERAL RITES)	151
XII. ASWA-MEDHA (SACRIFICE OF THE HORSE)	161
CONCLUSION	171
TRANSLATOR'S EPILOGUE	174

THE MAHABHARATA

BOOK I

ASTRA DARSANA

(The Tournament)

THE scene of the Epic is the ancient kingdom of the Kurus which flourished along the upper course of the Ganges; and the historical fact on which the Epic is based is a great war which took place between the Kurus and a neighbouring tribe, the Panchalas, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century before Christ.

According to the Epic, Pandu and Dhritarashtra, who was born blind, were brothers. Pandu died early, and Dhritarashtra became king of the Kurus, and brought up the five sons of Pandu along with his hundred sons.

Yudhishtir, the eldest son of Pandu, was a man of truth and piety; Bhima, the second, was a stalwart fighter; and Arjun, the third son, distinguished himself above all the other princes in arms. The two youngest brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva, were twins. Duryodhan was the eldest son of Dhritarashtra and was jealous of his cousins, the sons of Pandu. A tournament was held, and in the course of the day a warrior named Karna, of unknown origin, appeared on the scene and proved himself a worthy rival of Arjun. The rivalry between Arjun and Karna is the leading thought of the Epic, as the rivalry between Achilles and Hector is the leading thought of the Iliad.

It is only necessary to add that the sons of Pandu, as well as Karna were, like the heroes of Homer, god-born chiefs. Som god inspired the birth of each. Yudhishtir was the son of Dharm or Virtue, Bhima of Vayu or Wind, Arjun of Indra or Rain-god the twin youngest were the sons of the Aswin twins, and Karna was the son of Surya, the Sun, but was believed by himself and by all others to be the son of a simple chariot-driver.

The portion translated in this Book forms Sections cxxxiv to cxxxvii. of Book i. of the original Epic in Sanscrit (Calcutta edition of 1834).

I

The Gathering

Wrathful sons of Dhrita-rashtra, born of Kuru's royal race,
Righteous sons of noble Pandu, god-born men of godlike grace,

Skill in arms attained these princes from a Brahman warrior bold,
Drona, priest and proud preceptor, peerless chief of days of old !

Out spake Drona to the monarch in Hastina's royal hall,
Spake to Bhishma and to Kripa, spake to lords and courtiers all :

"Mark the gallant princes, monarch, trained in arms and warlike art,
Let them prove their skill and valour, rein the steed and throw the dart.

Answered then the ancient monarch, joyful was his royal heart,
"Best of Brahmanas and of warriors, nobly hast thou done thy part,

Name the place and fix the moment, hold a royal tournament,
Publish wide the laws of combat, publish far thy king's consent.

Sightless roll these orbs of vision, dark to me is noonday light,
Happier men will mark the tourney and the peerless princes' fight,

Let the good and wise Vidura serve thy mandate and behest,
Let a father's pride and gladness fill this old and cheerless breast."

Northward went the wise Vidura to his sacred duties bound,
Drona, blessed with skill and wisdom, measured out the tourney ground,

Clear of jungle was the meadow, by a crystal fountain graced,
Drona on the lighted altar holy gift and offering placed,

Holy was the star auspicious, and the hour was calm and bright,
Men from distant town and hamlet came to view the sacred rite.

Then arose white stately mansions, built by architects of fame,
Decked with arms for Kuru's monarch and for every royal dame,

And the people built their stages circling round the listed green,
And the nobles with their white tents graced the fair and festive scene.

Rightly dawned the festal morning, and the monarch left his hall,
Bhishma and the pious Kripa with the lords and courtiers all,

And they came unto the mansions, gay and glittering, gold-encased,
Decked with gems and rich *baidurya*, and with strings of pearls be-laced.

Fair Gandhari, queen of Kuru, Pritha, Pandu's widowed dame,
Ladies in their gorgeous garments, maids of beauty and of fame,

Lounged on their glittering mansions where the tints harmonious blend,
As, on Meru's golden mountain, queens of heavenly gods ascend !

And the people of the city, Brahmans, Vaisyas, Kshatras bold,
Men from stall and loom and anvil gathered thick, the young and old,

And arose the sound of trumpet and the surging people's cry,
Like the voice of angry ocean, tempest-lashed, sublime and high !

Came the saintly white-robed Drona, white his sacrificial thread,
White his sandal-mark and garlands, white the locks that crowned his head,

With his son renowned for valour walked forth Drona, radiant, high,
The Moon with Mars conjoined walks upon the cloudless sky !

Offerings to the gods immortal then the priestly warrior made,
 Brahmanas with their chanted *mantra* worship and obeisance paid,

And the festive note of *sankha* mingled with the trumpet's sound,
 Throngs of warriors, various-armed, came unto the listed ground.

II

The Princes

Gauntleted and jewel-girdled, now the warlike princes came,
 With their stately bows and quivers, and their swords like wreaths of flar

Each behind his elder stepping, good Yudhisthir first of all,
 Each his wondrous skill displaying held the silent crowds in thrall,

And the men in admiration marked them with a joyful eye,
 Or by sudden panic stricken stooped to let the arrow fly !

Mounted on their rapid coursers oft the princes proved their aim,
 Racing, hit the targe with arrows lettered with their royal name,

With their glinting sunlit weapons, with their bearing proud and high,
 More than mortals seemed the warriors, bright *gandharvas* of the sky

Shouts of joy the people uttered as by sudden impulse driven,
 Mingled voice of tens of thousands struck the pealing vault of heaven

Still the princes shook their weapons, drove the deep resounding car,
 Or on steed or tusker mounted waged the glorious mimic war !

Mighty sword and ample buckler, ponderous mace the princes wield,
 Brightly gleam their lightning rapiers as they range the listed field,

Brave and fearless is their action and their movement quick and light,
 Skilled and true the thrust and parry of their weapons flaming bright

III

Bhima and Duryodhan

Bhima came and proud Duryodhan with their maces lifted high,
Like two cliffs with lofty turrets cleaving through the azure sky,

In their warlike arms accoutred with their girded loins they stood,
Like two untamed jungle-tusked in the deep and echoing wood !

And as tusked range the forest, so they range the spacious field,
Right to left and back they wander and their ponderous maces wield,

Unto Kuru's sightless monarch wise Vidura drew the scene,
With proudly of the princes spake unto the Kuru queen.

While the stalwart Bhima battled with Duryodhan brave and strong,
Merce in wrath, for one or other, shouted forth the maddened throng,

"Hail to Kuru prince Duryodhan !" "Hail to Bhima hero proud !"
Sounds like these from surging myriads rose in tumult deep and loud.

And with troubled vision Drona marked the heaving restless plain,
Marked the crowd by anger shaken, like the tempest-shaken main,

To his son he softly whispered quick the tumult to appease,
Hark the armed and angry wrestlers, bid the deadly combat cease,

With their lifted clubs the princes slow retired on signal given,
Like the parting of the billows, mighty-heaving, tempest-driven !

Came forth then the ancient Drona on the open battle-ground,
Topped the drum and lofty trumpet, spake in voice like thunder's sound :

Bid him come, the gallant Arjun ! pious prince and warrior skilled,
Arjun, born of mighty INDRA, and with VISHNU'S prowess filled."

IV

The Advent of Arjun

Gauntleted and jewel-gridled, with his bow of ample height,
Archer Arjun pious-hearted to the gods performed a rite,

Then he stepped forth proud and stately in his golden mail encased,
Like the sunlit cloud of evening with the golden rainbow graced,

And a gladness stirred the people all around the listed plain,
Voice of drum and blare of trumpet rose with *sankha's* festive strain !

"Mark the gallant son of Pandu, whom the happy Pritha bore,
Mark the heir of INDRA's valour, matchless in his arms and lore,

Mark the warrior young and valiant, peerless in his skill of arms,
Mark the prince of stainless virtue, decked with grace and varied charms."

Pritha heard such grateful voices borne aloft unto the sky,
Milk of love suffused her bosom, tear of joy was in her eye !

And where rested Kuru's monarch, joyous accents struck his ear,
And he turned to wise Vidura seeking for the cause to hear :

"Wherefore like the voice of ocean, when the tempest winds prevail,
Rise the voices of the people and the spacious skies assail ?"

Answered him the wise Vidura, "It is Pritha's gallant boy,
Godlike moves in golden armour, and the people shout for joy !"

"Pleased am I," so spake the monarch, "and I bless my happy fate,
Pritha's sons like fires of *jajna* sanctify this mighty State !"

Now the voices of the people died away and all was still,
Arjun to his proud preceptor showed his might and matchless skill,

Powering high or lowly bending, on the turf or on his car,
With his bow and glistening arrows Arjun waged the mimic war,

Targets on the wide arena, mighty tough or wondrous small,
With his arrows, still unfailing, Arjun pierced them one and all,

Wild-boar shaped in plates of iron coursed the wide-extending field,
In its jaws five glistening arrows sent the archer wondrous-skilled,

Tow-horn, by a thread suspended, was by winds unceasing swayed,
One and twenty well-aimed arrows on this moving mark he laid,

And with equal skill his rapier did the godlike Arjun wield,
Whirling round his mace of battle-ranged the spacious tourney field!

V

The Advent of Karna

Now the feats of arms are ended and the closing hour draws nigh,
Music's voice is hushed in silence and dispersing crowds pass by,

Hark ! Like welkin-shaking thunder wakes a deep and deadly sound,
Clank and din of warlike weapons burst upon the tented ground !

Are the solid mountains splitting, is it bursting of the earth,
Is it tempest's pealing accent whence the lightning takes its birth ?

Thoughts like these alarm the people for the sound is dread and high,
To the gate of the arena turns the crowd with anxious eye !

Gathered round preceptor Drona, Pandu's sons in armour bright,
Like the five-starred constellation round the radiant Queen of Night,

Gathered round the proud Duryodhan, dreaded for his exploits done,
All his brave and warlike brothers and preceptor Drona's son,

So the gods encircled INDRA, thunder-wielding, fierce and bold,
When he scattered Danu's children in the misty days of old !

Pale, before the unknown warrior, gathered nations part in twain,
Conqueror of hostile cities, lofty Karna treads the plain,

In his golden mail accoutred and his rings of yellow gold,
Like a moving cliff in stature armed comes the chieftain bold,

Pritha, yet unwedded, bore him, peerless archer on the earth,
Portion of the solar radiance, for the Sun inspired his birth !

Like a tusker in his fury, like a lion in his ire,
Like the sun in noontide radiance, like the all-consuming fire,

Lion-like in build and muscle, stately as a golden palm,
Blessed with every manly virtue, peerless, dauntless, proud and calm !

With his looks serene and lofty field of war the chief surveyed,
Scarce to Kripa or to Drona honour and obeisance made,

Still the panic-stricken people viewed him with unmoving gaze,
Who may be this unknown warrior, questioned they in hushed amaze !

'Then in voice of pealing thunder spake fair Pritha's eldest son,
Unto Arjun, Pritha's youngest, each, alas ! to each unknown :

"All thy feats of weapons, Arjun, done with vain and needless boast,
These and greater I accomplish--witness be this mighty host !"

Thus spake proud and peerless Karna in his accents deep and loud,
And as moved by sudden impulse joyous rose the listening crowd,

And a gleam of mighty transport glows in proud Duryodhan's heart,
Flames of wrath and jealous anger from the eyes of Arjun start,

Drona gave the word, and Karna, Pritha's war-beloving son,
With his sword and with his arrows did the feats by Arjun done !

VI

The Rival Warriors

Joyful was the proud Duryodhan, gladness gleamed upon his face,
And he spake to gallant Karna with a loving long embrace :

"Welcome, mighty armed chieftain ! thou hast victor's honours won,
Thine is all my wealth and kingdom, name thy wish and it is done !"

Answered Karna to Duryodhan, "Prince ! thy word is good as deed,
But I seek to combat Arjun and to win the victor's meed !"

"Noble is the boon thou seekest," answered Kuru's prince of fame,
"Be a joy unto your comrades, let the foeman dread thy name !"

Anger flamed in Arjun's bosom, and he spake in accents rude
Unto Karna who in triumph calm and proud and fearless stood :

"Chief ! who comest uninvited, pratest with thy lying boast,
Thou shalt die the death of braggarts—witness be this mighty host !"

Karna answered calm and proudly, "Free this listed field to all,
Warriors enter by their prowess, wait not, Arjun, for thy call,

Farlike chieftains take their places by their strength of arm and might,
And their warrant is their falchion, valour sanctifies their right,

Angry word is coward's weapon, Arjun, speak with arrows keen,
If I lay thee, witness Drona, low upon the listed green !"

Drona gave the word impartial, wrathful Arjun, dread of foes,
Parted from his loving brothers, in his glist'ning arms arose,

Karna clasped the Kuru's princes, parted from them one and all,
With his bow and ample quiver proudly stepped the warrior tall.

Now the clouds with lurid flashes gathered darkling, thick and high,
Lines of cranes like gleams of laughter sailed across the gloomy sky,

Rain-god INDRA over Arjun watched with father's partial love,
Sun-god SURYA over Karna shed his light from far above,

Arjun stood in darkening shadow by the inky clouds concealed,
Bold and bright in open sunshine radiant Karna stood revealed !

Proud Duryodhan and his brothers stood by Karna calm and bold
Drona stood by gallant Arjun, and brave Bhishma warrior old,

Women too with partial glances viewed the one or other chief,
But by equal love divided silent Pritha swooned in grief !

Wise Vidura, true to duty, with an anxious hurry came,
Sandal-drops and sprinkled waters roused the woe-distracted dame,

And she saw her sons in combat, words of woe she uttered none,
Speechless wept, for none must fathom Karna was her eldest son !

VII

The Anointment of Karna

Crested Karna, helméd Arjun, proudly trod the spacious green,
Kripa, skilled in herald's duties, spake unto the warriors keen :

*"This is helmet-wearing Arjun, sprung of Kuru's mighty race,
Pandu's son and borne by Pritha, prince of worth and warlike grace,*

*Long-armed Chief ! declare thy lineage, and the race thou dost adorn
Name thy mother and thy father, and the house that saw thee born,*

*By the rules of war Prince Arjun claims his rival chief to know,
Princes may not draw their weapon 'gainst a base and nameless foe !"*

Karna silent heard this mandate, rank nor lineage could he claim,
Like a raindrop-pelted lotus bent his humble head in shame !

"Prince we reckon," cried Duryodhan, "not the man of birth alone,
Warlike leader of his forces as a prince and chief we own,

Karna by his warlike valour is of crownéd kings the peer,
Karna shall be crownéd monarch, nations shall his mandate hear!"

North they brought the corn and treasure, golden coin and water-jar,
In the throne they seated Karna famed in many a deathful war,

Brahmans chanted sacred *mantra* which the holy books ordain,
And anointed crownéd Karna king of Anga's fair domain,

And they raised the red umbrella, and they waved the *choturi* fan,
Blessings on the crownéd monarch! honour to the bravest man!"

Now the holy rites accomplished, in his kingly robes arrayed
Karna unto prince Duryodhan thus in grateful accents prayed:

"Gift of kingdom, good Duryodhan, speaketh well thy noble heart,
What return can grateful Karna humbly render on his part?"

"Grant thy friendship," cried Duryodhan, "for no other boon I crave,
Be Duryodhan's dearest comrade, be his helper true and brave!"

"Be it so!" responded Karna with a proud and noble grace,
And he sealed his loyal friendship in a loving long embrace!

VIII

The Chariot-driver

Dewed with drops of toil and languor, lo! a chariot-driver came,
Loosely hung his scanty garments and a staff upheld his frame,

Karna, now a crownéd monarch, to the humble Suta sped,
As a son unto a father, reverently bent his head!

With his scanty cloth the driver sought his dusty feet to hide,
And he hailed him as a father hails his offspring in his pride,

And he clasped unto his bosom crownéd Karna's noble head,
And on Karna's dripping forehead fresh and loving tear-drops shed !

Is he son of chariot-driver ? Doubts arose in Bhima's mind,
And he sought to humble Karna with reproachful words unkind :

"Wilt thou, high-descended hero, with a Kuru cross thy brand ?
But the goad of cattle-drivers better suits, my friend, thy hand !

Wilt thou as a crownéd monarch rule a mighty nation's weal ?
For the jackal of the jungle oft the sacred food will steal !"

Quivered Karna's lips in anger, word of answer spake he none,
But a deep sigh shook his bosom, and he gazed upon the sun !

IX

Close of the Day

Like a lordly tusker rising from a beauteous lotus lake,
Rose Duryodhan from his brothers, proudly thus to Bhima spake :

"With such insults seek not, Bhima, thus to cause a warrior grief,
Bitter taunts but ill befit thee, strong-armed tiger-waisted chief,

Proudest chief may fight the humblest, for like river's noble course,
Noble deeds proclaim the warrior, and we question not their source !

Teacher Drona, priest and warrior, owns a poor and humble birth,
Kripa, noblest of Gautamas, springeth from the lowly earth,

Known to me thy lineage Bhima, thine and of thy brothers four,
Amorous gods your birth imparted, so they say, in days of yore !

Mark the great and gallant Karna decked in rings and weapons fair,
 She-deer breeds not lordly tigers in her poor and lowly lair,

Karna comes to rule the wide earth, not fair Anga's realms alone,
 By his valour and his virtue, by the homage which I own,

And if prince or armed chieftain doth my word or deed gainsay,
 Let him take his bow and quiver, meet me in a deadly fray !"

Loud applauses greet the challenge and the people's joyful cry,
 But the thickening shades of darkness fill the earth and evening sky,

And the red lamp's fitful lustre shone upon the field around,
 Slowly with the peerless Karna proud Duryodhan left the ground.

Pandu's sons with warlike Drona marked the darksome close of day,
 And with Kripa and with Bhishma homeward silent bent their way,

"Arjun is the gallant victor !" "Valiant Karna's won the day !"
 "Prince Duryodhan is the winner !" Various thus the people say.

By some secret sign and token Pritha knew her gallant boy,
 Saw him crowned king of Anga with a mother's secret joy,

But with greater joy Duryodhan fastened Karna to his side,
 Feared no longer Arjun's prowess, skill of arms and warlike pride,

Even Yudhishthir reckoned Karna mightiest warrior on the earth,
 Half misdoubted Arjun's prowess, archer-skill and warrior-worth !

Gifted by :—

Mr.

...

...

NOT ELEGANT AND

NOT SATISFACTORY

BOOK II

SWAYAMVARA

(The Bride's Choice)

THE mutual jealousies of the princes increased from day to day, and when Yudhishtir, the eldest of all the princes and the eldest son of the late king Pandu, was recognised heir-apparent, the anger of Duryodhan and his brothers knew no bounds. And they formed a dark scheme to kill the sons of Pandu.

The sons of Pandu were induced with their mother to pay a visit to a distant town called Varanavata. A house had been built there for their residence, constructed of inflammable materials. At the appointed time fire was set to the house : but the five brothers and their mother escaped the conflagration through a subterranean passage, retired into forests, and lived in the disguise of Brahmans.

In course of time they heard of the approaching celebration of the marriage of the princess of Panchala, an ancient kingdom in the vicinity of modern Kanouj. All the monarchs of Northern India were invited, and the bride would choose her husband from among the assembled kings according to the ancient *Swayamvara* custom. The five sons of Pandu decided to go and witness the ceremony.

The portion translated in this Book forms Sections clxxxiv to clxxxix, of Book i. of the original text.

I

Journey to Panchala

Now the righteous sons of Pandu, wand'ring far from day to day,
 Unto South Panchala's country glad and joyful held their way,

When travelling with their mother, so it chanced by will of fate,
 They were met by pious Brahmans bound for South Panchala's State,

And the pure and holy Brahmans hailed the youths of noble fame,
 Asked them whither they would journey, from what distant land they came.

"From the land of Ekachakra," good Yudhishtir answered so,
 "With our ancient mother travelling unto distant lands we go."

"Heard ye not," the Brahmans questioned, "in Panchala's fair domain,
 Drupad, good and gracious monarch, doth a mighty feast ordain,

That festive land we journey, Drupad's bounteous gifts to share,
 And to see the *Satyamitra* of Panchala's princess fair,—

Human mother never bore her, human bosom never fed,
 From the Altar sprang the maiden who some noble prince will wed!

Soft her eyes like lotus-petal, sweet her tender jasmine form,
 And a maiden's stainless honour doth her gentle soul inform,

And her brother, mailed and armed with his bow and arrows dire,
 Radiant as the blazing fire-light sprang from Sacrificial Fire!

For the sister slender-waisted, dowered with beauty rich and rare,
 And with fragrance of blue lotus perfumes all the sweetened air,

She will chose from noble suitors gathered from the west and east,
 Bright and fair shall be the wedding, rich and bounteous be the feast!

Kings will come from distant regions sacrificing wealth and gold,
Stainless monarchs versed in *sastra*, pious-hearted, mighty-souled,

Handsome youths and noble princes from each near and distant land,
Car-borne chieftains bold and skilful, brave of heart and stout of hand

And to win the peerless princess they will scatter presents rare,
Food and milch-kine, wealth and jewels, gold and gifts and garments fair

Noble gifts we take as Brahmans, bless the rite with gladsome heart,
Share the feast so rich and bounteous, then with joyful minds depart.

Actors, mimes and tuneful minstrels fair Panchala's court will throng,
Famed reciters of *puranas*, dancers skilled and wrestlers strong,

Come with us, the wedding witness, share the banquet rich and rare,
Pleased with gifts and noble presents to your distant home repair.

Dowered ye are with princely beauty, like the radiant gods above,
Even on you the partial princess may surrender heart and love,

And this youth so tall and stalwart, mighty-armed, strong and bold,
He may win in feats of valour rich renown and wealth untold !"

"Be it so," Yudhishtir answered, "to Panchala we repair,
View the wedding of the princess and the royal bounty share !"

Thus the righteous sons of Pandu with the Brahmans took their way,
Where in South Panchala's kingdom mighty Drupad held his sway,

And it fell, the saintly *rishi*, deathless bard of deathless lay,
Herald of the holy Vedas, Vyasa stood before their way,

And the princes bowed unto him and received his blessings kind,
By his mandate to Panchala went with pleased and joyful mind !

Jungle woods and silver waters round their sylvan pathway lay,
Halting at each wayside station marched the princes day by day,

Singing hymn and holy *sastre*, fair in speech and pure in heart,
 Travelling slow they reached Panchala with its spacious town and mart,
 Saw the fort, bazaar and city, gilded spire and shining dome,
 And a potter's distant cottage made their humble unknown home,
 And disguised as pious brahmans, sons of Pandu begged their food,
 People knew not Kuru princes in that dwelling poor and rude.

II

The Wedding Assembly

To the helméd son of Pandu, Arjun pride of Kuru's race,
 Drupad longed to give his daughter peerless in her maiden grace,
 And of massive wood unbending, Drupad made a stubborn bow,
 Saying Arjun prince or chieftain might not bend the weapon low,
 And he made a whirling discus, hung it 'neath the open sky,
 And beyond the whirling discus placed a target far and high,
 "Whoso strings this bow," said Drupad, "hits the target in his pride
 Through the high and circling discus, wins Panchala's princely bride!"
 And they spake the monarch's mandate in the kingdoms near and far,
 And from every town and country princes came and chiefs of war,
 Came serene and saintly *rishis* for to bless the holy rite,
 Kuru with the gallant Karna for to win the maiden bright,
 Brahmans came from distant regions with their sacred learning blest,
 Drupad with a royal welcome greeted every honoured guest.
 Now the festal day approacheth! Gathering men with ocean's voice
 Filled the wide and circling stages to behold the maiden's choice,

Royal guests and princely suitors came in pomp of wealth and pride,
Car-borne chiefs and mailed warriors came to win the beauteous bride !

North-east of the festive city they enclosed a level ground,
Towering dome and stately palace cunning builders built around,

And by moat and wall surrounded, pierced by gate and arched door,
By a canopy of splendour was the red field covered o'er !

Now the festal day approacheth ! Sacred censers fragrance lent,
Sprinkled *chandan* spread its coolness, garlands breathed the sweetest
scent,

All around were swan-white mansions, lofty domes and turrets high,
Like the peaks of white Kailasa cleaving through the azure sky !

Sparkling gems the chambers lighted, golden nets the windows laced,
Spacious stairs superb and lofty were with gorgeous carpets graced,

Rich festoons and graceful garlands gently waved like streamers gay,
And the swan-like silver mansions glowed in the light of day !

Now the festal day approacheth ! High the royal chambers lay
With their lofty gilded turrets like the peaks of Himalay,

In these halls in pride and splendour dwelt each rich and royal guest,
Fired by mutual emulation and in costly jewels drest,

Decked and perfumed sat these rulers, mighty-armed, rich in fame,
Lion-monarchs, noble-destined, chiefs of pure and spotless name,

Pious to the holy BRAHMA and their subjects' hope and stay,
Loved of all for noble actions, kind and courteous in their sway.

Now the festal day approacheth ! Like the heaving of the main
Surge the ranks of gathered nations on the wide and spacious plain,

Draupadi's sons in guise of Brahmins mix with Brahmins versed in lore,
 Marking Drupad's wealth and splendour, gazing, wondering evermore,
 Dancers charm the gathered people, singers sing and actors play,
 Seven days of festive splendour greet the concourse rich and gay.

III

The Bride

Sound the drum and voice the *sankha* ! Brightly dawns the bridal day,
 Fresh from morning's pure ablutions comes the bride in garments gay,

And her golden bridal garland carrying on her graceful arm
 Softly, sweetly, steps Draupadi, queen of every winning charm !

Then a Brahman versed in *mantra*, ancient priest of lunar race,
 Lights the Fire, with pious offering seeks its blessings and its grace,

Whispered words of benediction saints and holy men repeat,
 Conch and trumpet's voice is silent, hushed the lofty war-drum's beat,

And there reigns a solemn silence, and in stately pomp and pride,
 Drupad's son leads forth his sister, fair Panchala's beauteous bride !

In his loud and lofty accents like the distant thunder's sound,
 Drupad's son his father's wishes thus proclaims to all around :

*"Mark this bow, assembled monarchs, and the target hung on high,
 Through yon whirling pierced discus let five glistening arrows fly,*

*Whoso, born of noble lineage, hits the far suspended aim,
 Let him stand and as his guerdon Drupad's beauteous maiden claim !"*

Then he turns unto Draupadi, tells each prince and suitor's name,
 Tells his race and lofty lineage and his warlike deeds of fame.

32522

IV

The Suitors

"Brave Duryodhan and his brothers, princes of the Kuruland,
Karna proud and peerless archer, sister ! seek thy noble hand,

And Gandhara's warlike princes, Bhoja's monarch true and bold,
And the son of mighty Drona, all bedecked in gems and gold !

King and prince from Matsya kingdom grace this noble wedding-feast,
Monarchs from more distant regions north and south and west and east,

Tamralipta and Kalinga on the eastern ocean wave,
Pattan's port whose hardy children western ocean's dangers brave !

From the distant land of Madra car-borne monarch Salya came,
And from Dwarka's sea-girt regions Valadeva known to fame,

Valadeva and his brother, Krishna sprung from Yadu's race,
Of the Vrishni clan descended, soul of truth and righteous grace !

This is mighty Jayadratha come from Sindhu's sounding shore,
Famed for warlike feats of valour, famed alike for sacred lore,

This is fair Kosala's monarch whose bright deeds our heralds sing,
From the sturdy soil of Chedi, this is Chedi's peerless king,

This is mighty Jarasandha come from far Magadha's land,
These are other princely suitors, sister, eager for thy hand,

All the wide earth's warlike rulers seek to shoot the distant aim,
Princess, whoso hits the target, choose as thine that prince of fame !"

Decked with jewels, young and valiant, all aflame with soft desire,
Conscious of their worth and valour, all the suitors rose in ire,

ably horn, of lofty presence, full of young unyielding pride,
 like the tusked wild and lordly in Himalay's wooded side !

on his rival marks as foeman as in field of deadly strife,
 on regards the fair Draupadi as his own, his queenly wife,

in the gorgeous field they gather by a maddening passion fired,
 and they strive as strove the bright gods, when by Uma's love inspired !

and the gods in cloud-borne chariots came to view a scene so fair,
 bright ADITYAS in their splendour, MARUTS in the moving air,

winged *Suparnas*, scaly *Nagas*, saintly *Siddhas* pure and high,
 by *Gandharvas* famed for music, fair *Apsaras* of the sky !

Valadeva armed with ploughshare, Krishna chief of righteous fame,
 with the other Yadu chieftains to that wondrous bridal came,

Krishna marked the sons of Pandu eager for the maiden queen,
 like the wild tusked for a lotus, like the fire that lurks unseen,

and he knew the warlike brothers in their holy Brahman guise,
 invited them to Valadeva, gazing with a glad surprise !

and the other chiefs and monarchs with their eyes upon the bride,
 asked nor knew the sons of Pandu, moveless, speechless by her side,

and the long-armed sons of Pandu smitten by KANDARPA's dart,
 looked on her with longing languor and with love-impassioned heart !

and the Immortals gaily crowding viewed the scene surpassing fair,
 as evenly blossoms soft descending with a perfume filled the air,

and the celestial cars in concourse sailed upon the cloudless sky,
 and drum and flute and harp and tabor sounded deep and sounded high !

V

Trial of Skill

Uprose one by one the suitors, marking still the distant aim,
Mighty monarchs, gallant princes, chiefs of proud and warlike fame,

Decked in golden crown and necklace and inflamed by pride and love
Stoutly strove the eager suitors viewing well the targe above,

Strove to string the weapon vainly : tough unbending was the bow,
Slightly bent, rebounding quickly, laid the gallant princes low !

Strove the handsome suitors vainly, decked in gem and burnished gold,
Reft of diadem and necklace fell each chief and warrior bold,

Reft of golden crown and garland, shamed and humbled in their pride,
Groaned the suitors in their anguish, sought no more Panchala's bride

Uprose Karna, peerless archer, proudest of the archers he,
And he went and strung the weapon, fixed the arrows gallantly,

Stood like SURYA in his splendour and like AGNI in his flame. —
Pandu's sons in terror whispered, Karna sure must hit the aim,

But in proud and queenly accents Drupad's queenly daughter said :
"Monarch's daughter, born a princess, Suta's son I will not wed !"

Karna heard with crimsoned forehead, left the emprise almost done,
Left the bow already circled, silent gazed upon the Sun !

Uprose Chedi's haughty monarch, mightiest of the monarchs he,
Other kings had failed inglorious, Sisupala stood forth free,

Firm in heart and fixed in purpose, bent the tough unbending bow,
Vainly ; for the bow rebounding laid the haughty monarch low !

Uprose sturdy Jarasandha, fair Magadha's mighty chief,
Held the bow and stood undaunted, tall and stately as a cliff,

At once more the bow rebounded, and the monarch in his shame
 Left in haste Panchala's mansions for the region whence he came !

Prose Salya, king of Madra, strove with wondrous skill and might,
 Painly ; on his knees descending fell in sad inglorious plight,

Thus each monarch fell and faltered, merry whispers went around,
 And the sound of stifled laughter circled round the festive ground !

VI

The Disguised Arjun

Hushed the merry sound of laughter, hushed each suitor in his shame,
 Arjun, godlike son of Pritha, from the ranks of Brahman came,

Disguised as priest serene and holy, fair as INDRA's rainbow bright,
 All the Brahman shook their deer-skins, cheered him in their hearts'
 delight !

Some there were with sad misgivings heard the sound of joyous cheer,
 And their minds were strangely anxious, whispered murmurs spake their
 fear :

Wondrous bow which Sisupala, mighty Salya could not strain,
 Parasandha famed for prowess strove to bend and string in vain,

Can a Brahman weak by nature, and in warlike art untrained,
 Yield the bow which crowned monarchs, long-armed chieftains have not
 strained ?

Sure the Brahman boy in folly dares a foolish thoughtless deed,
 And amidst this throng of monarchs shame will be our only meed,

Youth in youthful pride or madness will a foolish emprise dare,
 Anger men should stop his rashness and the Brahman's honour spare !"

"Shame he will not bring unto us," other Brahman made reply,
 "Rather, in this royal concourse, rich renown and honour high,

Like a tusker strong and stately, like Himalay's towering crest,
Stands unmoved the youthful Brahman, ample-shouldered, deep in chest,

Lion-like his gait is agile and determined is his air,
Trust me he can do an emprise who hath lofty will to dare !

He will do the feat of valour, will not bring disgrace and stain,
Nor is task in all this wide earth which a Brahman tries in vain,

Holy men subsist on wild fruits, in the strength of penance strong,
Spare in form, in spirit mightier than the mightiest warlike throng !

Ask not if 'tis right or foolish when a Brahman tries his fate,
If it leads to woe or glory, fatal fall or fortune great,

Son of *rishi* Jamadagni baffled kings and chieftains high,
And Agastya stainless *rishi* drained the boundless ocean dry,

Let this young and daring Brahman undertake the warlike deed,
Let him try and by his prowess win the victor's noble meed !"

While the Brahmans deep revolving hopes and timid fears expressed,
By the bow the youthful Arjun stood unmoved like mountain crest,

Silent round the wondrous weapon thrice the mighty warrior went,
To the God of Gods, ISANA, in a silent prayer he bent,

Then the bow which gathered warriors vainly tried to bend and strain,
And the monarchs of the wide earth sought to string and wield in vain,

Godlike Arjun born of INDRA, filled with VISHNU's matchless might,
Bent the wondrous bow of Drupad, fixed the shining darts aright,

Through the disc the shining arrows flew with strange and hissing sound,
Hit and pierced the distant target, brought it thundering on the ground !

Shouts of joy and loud applauses did the mighty feat declare,
Heavenly blossoms soft descended, heavenly music thrilled the air,

the Brahmins shook their deerskins, but each irritated chief
a lowly muttered whisper spake his rising rage and grief,

the swelling voice of trumpet spake of Arjun's emprise done,
as in lays of deathless beauty sang of Drupad's daughter won !

Drupad in the Brahman's mantle knew the hero proud and brave,
but the rage of baffled suitors sought the gallant prince to save,

with his twin-born youngest brothers good Yudhishtir left the hall,
Draupadi marked the gathering tempest stood by Arjun proud and tall.

Even a queen the beauteous maiden smiled upon the archer brave,
giving on him the bridal garland and the bridal garment gave,

and the young and gallant Arjun took Panchala's princess-bride,
people's shouts and Brahmins' blessings joyful sounded far and wide !

VII

The Tumult

Like the suitors anger-shaken, like a forest tempest-torn,
Panchala's courteous monarch came to greet a Brahman-born :

Will he like the grass of jungle trample us in haughty pride,
a prating priest and Brahman wed the proud and peerless bride ?

Our hopes like nourished saplings shall he now the fruit deny,
a monarch proud who insults monarchs sure a traitor's death shall die,

Anger for his rank we know not, have no mercy for his age,
a rich foe of crowned monarchs, victim to our righteous rage !

When he asked us to his palace, favoured us with royal grace,
bestowed us with princely bounty, but to compass our disgrace,

his concourse of brave monarchs, glorious like a heavenly band,
shall he find no likely suitor for his beauteous daughter's hand ?

And this rite of *swayamvara*, so our sacred laws ordain,
Is for warlike Kshatras only, priests that custom shall not stain,

If this maiden on a Brahman casts her eye, devoid of shame,
Let her expiate her folly in a pyre of blazing flame !

Leave the priestling in his folly sinning through a Brahman's greed,
For we wage no war with Brahmans and forgive a foolish deed,

Much we woe to holy Brahmans for our realm and wealth and life,
Blood of priest or wise preceptor shall not stain our noble strife,

In the blood of sinful Drupad we the righteous laws maintain,
Such disgrace in future ages monarchs shall not meet again !"

Spake the suitors, tiger-hearted, iron-handed, bold and strong,
Fiercely bent on blood and vengeance blindly rose the maddened throng

On they came, the angry monarchs, armed for cruel vengeful strife,
Drupad midst the holy Brahmans trembling fled for fear of life,

Like wild elephants of jungle rushed the kings upon their foes,
Calm and stately, stalwart Bhima and the gallant Arjun rose !

With a wilder rage the monarchs viewed these brothers cross their path
Rushed upon the daring warriors for to slay them in their wrath,

Weaponless was noble Bhima, but in strength like lightning's brand,
Tore a tree with peerless prowess, shook it as a mighty wand,

And the foe-compelling warrior held that mace of living wood,
Strong as Death with Death's own weapon, facing all his foes he stood

Arjun too with godlike valour stood unmoved, his bow in hand,
Side by side the dauntless brothers faced the fierce and fiery band !

VIII

Krishna to the Rescue

Krishna knew the sons of Pandu though in robes of Brahmans dressed,
 His elder, Valadeva, thus his inner thoughts expressed :

Mark that youth with bow and arrow and with lion's lordly gait,
 He is helmet-wearing Arjun, greatest warrior midst the great,

Mark his mate, with tree uprooted how he meets the suitor band,
 He the tiger-waisted Bhima none can claim such strength of hand !

And the youth with eyes like lotus, he who left the court erewhile,
 He is pious-souled Yudhishtir, man without a sin or guile,

And the others by Yudhishtir, Pandu's twin-born sons are they,
 With these sons the righteous Pritha 'scaped where death and danger lay,

For the jealous-souled Duryodhan darkly schemed their death by fire,
 But the righteous sons of Pandu 'scaped his unrelenting ire !"

Krishna rose amidst the monarchs, strove the tumult to appease,
 And unto the angry suitors spake in words of righteous peace,

Monarchs bowed to Krishna's mandate, left Panchala's festive land,
 Arjun took the beauteous princess, gently led her by the hand.

BOOK III

RAJASUYA

(*The Imperial Sacrifice*)

A CURIOUS incident followed the bridal of Draupadi. The five sons of Pandu returned with her to the potter's house, where they were living on alms according to the custom of Brahmans, and the brothers reported to their mother that they had received a great gift on that day. "Enjoy ye the gift in common," replied their mother, not knowing what it was. And as a mother's mandate cannot be disregarded, Draupadi became the common wife of the five brothers.

The real significance of this strange legend is unknown. The custom of brothers marrying a common wife prevails to this day in Thibet and among the hill-tribes of the Himalayas, but it never prevailed among the Aryan Hindus of India. It is distinctly prohibited in their laws and institutes, and finds no sanction in their literature, ancient or modern. The legend in the *Maha-bharata*, of brothers marrying a wife in common, stands alone and without parallel in Hindu traditions and literature.

Judging from the main incidents of the Epic, Draupadi might rather be regarded as the wife of the eldest brother Yudhishtir. Bhima had already mated himself to a female in a forest, by whom he had a son, Ghatotkacha, who distinguished himself in war later on. Arjun too married the sister of Krishna, shortly after Draupadi's bridal, and had by her a son, Abhimanyu, who was one of the heroes of the war. On the other hand, Yudhishtir, took to himself no wife save Draupadi, and she was crowned with Yudhishtir in the Rajasuya or Imperial Sacrifice. Notwithstanding the legend, therefore, Draupadi might be regarded as wedded to Yudhishtir, though

by the skill of Arjun, and this assumption would be in keeping with Hindu customs and laws, ancient and modern.

The jealous Duryodhan heard that his contrivance to kill his cousins at Varanavata had failed. He also heard that they had found a powerful friend in Draupad, and had formed an alliance with him. It was no longer possible to keep them from their rightful inheritance. The Kuru kingdom was accordingly partitioned; Duryodhan retained the eastern and richer portion with its ancient capital *Hastina-pura* on the Ganges; and the sons of Pandu were given the western portion on the Jumna, which was then a forest and a wilderness. The sons of Pandu cleared the forest and built a new capital *Indra-prastha*, the supposed ruins of which, near modern Delhi, are still pointed out to the curious traveller.

Yudhishtir the eldest of the five sons of Pandu, and now king of Indra-prastha, resolved to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, which is a formal assumption of the Imperial title over all the kings of ancient India. His brothers went out with troops in all directions to proclaim his supremacy over all surrounding kings. Jarasandha, the powerful and semi-civilised king of Magadha or South Behar, opposed and was killed; but other monarchs recognised the supremacy of Yudhishtir and came to the sacrifice with tributes. King Virata-rashtra and his sons, now reigning at Hastina-pura, were politely invited to take a share in the performance of the sacrifice.

The portion translated in the Book forms Sections xxxiii. to xvi. and Section xlv. of Book ii. of the original.

I

The Assemblage of Kings

ancient halls of proud Hastina mirrored bright on Ganga's wave!
 thither came the son of Pandu, young Nakula true and brave,

me to ask Hastina's monarch, chief of Kuru's royal race,
 partake Yudhishtir's banquet and his sacrifice to grace,

Dhrita rashtra came in gladness unto Indra-prastha's town,
Marked its new-built tower and turret on the azure Jumna frown,

With him came preceptor Kripa, and the ancient Bhishma came,
Elders of the race of Kuru, chiefs and Brahmans known to fame.

Monarchs came from distant regions to partake the holy rite,
Crested chiefs from court and castle in their arms accoutred bright,

Warriors came with ample tribute for the holy sacrifice,
Precious gems and costly jewels, gold and gifts of untold price.

Proud Duryodhan and his brothers came in fair and friendly guise,
With the ancient Kuru monarch and Vidura good and wise,

With his son came brave Suvala from Gandhara's distant land,
Car-borne Salya, peerless Karna, came with bow and spear and brand

Came the priest and proud preceptor Drona skilled in arms and lore,
Jayadratha famed for valour came from Sindhu's sounding shore,

Drupad came with gallant princes from Panchala's land of fame,
Salya lord of outer nations to the mighty gathering came.

Bhagadatta came in chariot from the land of nations brave,
Prag-jyotisha, where the red sun wakes on Brahma-putra's wave,

With him came untutored *mlechhas* who beside the ocean dwell,
Uncouth chiefs of dusky nations from the lands where mountains swell

Came Virata, Matsya's monarch, and his warlike sons and bold,
Sisupala, king of Chedi, with his son bedecked in gold,

Came the warlike chiefs of Vrishni from the shores of Western Sea,
And the lords of Madhya desa, ever warlike ever free !

II

Feast and Sacrifice

Yamuna's dark and limpid waters laved Yudhishtir's palace walls,
 and to hail him *Dharma-Raja* monarchs thronged his royal halls,

and to honoured kings and chieftains with a royal grace assigned
 places with sparkling waters and with trees umbrageous lined,

and poured thus, the mighty monarchs lived in mansions milky white,
 like the peaks of famed Kailasa lifting proud their snowy height !

Peaceful walls that swept the meadows circled round the royal halls,
 and of gold belaced the casements, gems bedecked the shining walls,

and flights of steps led up to chambers many-tinted-carpet-graced,
 and festooning fragrant garlands were harmonious interlaced !

And from below from spacious gateways rose the people's gathering cry,
 and from far the swan-white mansions caught the ravished gazer's eye,

And richly graced with precious metals shone the turrets bright and gay,
 like the rich-ored shining turrets of the lofty Himalay,

And the scene bedecked by *rishis* and by priests and kings of might,
 like one like azure sky in splendour graced by deathless Sons of Light !

And he led Yudhishtir unto Bhishma, elder of the Kuru race,
 and to Drona, proud preceptor, rich in lore and warlike grace,

And he took to wise preceptor Kripa versed in sacred rites of old,
 and Duryodhan and his brothers, honoured guests, and kinsmen bold :

And he bade friends and kinsmen, grant your favour and your sweet affection lend,
 by your kindness ever helpful poor Yudhishtir's rite attend,

BOOK IV

DYUTA

(The Fatal Dice)

DURYODHAN came back from the Imperial Sacrifice filled with jealousy against Yudhishtir, and devised plans to effect his fall. Sakuni, prince of Gandhara, shared Duryodhan's hatred towards the sons of Pandu, and helped him in his dark scheme.

Yudhishtir with all his piety and righteousness had one weakness, the love of gambling, which was one of the besetting sins of the monarchs of the day. Sakuni was an expert at false dice, and challenged Yudhishtir, and Yudhishtir held it a point of honour not to decline such a challenge.

He came from his new capital, Indra-prastha to Hastina-pura the capital of Duryodhan, with his mother and brothers and Draupadi. And as Yudhishtir, lost game after game, he was stung with his losses, and with the recklessness of a gambler still went on with the fatal game. His wealth and hoarded gold and jewels, his steeds, elephants and cars, his slaves male and female, his empire and possessions, were all staked and lost !

The madness increased, and Yudhishtir staked his brothers, and then himself, and then the fair Draupadi, and lost ! And thus the Emperor of Indra-prastha and his family were deprived of every possession on earth, and became the bond-slaves of Duryodhan. The old king Dhritarashtra released them from actual slavery, but the five brothers retired to forests as homeless exiles.

Portions of Section lxxv. and the whole of Sections lxxix., lxxvi., and lxxvii. of Book ii. of the original text have been translated in this Book.

Angry men were fed and feasted with an ample feast of rice,
 costly gifts to holy Brahmans graced the noble sacrifice,
ajya, *homa* offerings pleased the Shining Ones above,
 Brahmans pleased with costly presents showered their blessing and
 their love !

III

Glimpses of the Truth

Owned the day of *abhisheka*, proud anointment, sacred bath,
 Owned kings and learned Brahmans crowded on Yudhishtir's path,
 As gods and heavenly *rishis* throng in BRAHMA'S mansions bright,
 Holy priests and noble monarchs graced the sacrificial site !
 Measureless their fame and virtue, great their penance and their power,
 And in converse deep and learned Brahmans passed the radiant hour,
 And on subjects great and sacred, oft divided in their thought,
 Various sages in their wisdom various diverse maxims taught,
 Stronger reasons seemed the stronger, faultless reasons often failed,
 When disputants like the falcon fell on views their rivals held !
 Some were versed in Laws of Duty, some the Holy Vows professed,
 Some with gloss and varied comment eagerly their rivals pressed,
 Like the concourse of the Brahmans unto sacred learning given,
 Like the concourse of the bright stars in the glorious vault of heaven,
 None of impure caste and conduct trespassed on the holy site,
 None of impure life and manners stained Yudhishtir's sacred rite !
Na-rishi, saintly Narad, marked the sacrificial rite,
 Sanctifying by its lustre good Yudhishtir's royal might,

And a ray of heavenly wisdom lit the *rishi's* inner eye,
As he saw the gathered monarchs in the concourse proud and high.

He had heard from Great Immortals in their heavenly mansions bright,
All these kings were gods incarnate, portions of Celestial Light,

And he saw in them embodied beings of the upper sky,
And in lotus-eyed Krishna saw the Highest of the High !

Saw the ancient World-Preserver and creation's Primal Cause,
Who had sent the gods as monarchs to uphold his righteous laws,

Battle for the cause of virtue, perish in a deadly war,
Then to seek their upper mansions in the radiant realms afar !

"NARAYANA, World-Preserver, sent immortal gods on earth,
He himself in race of Yadu hath assumed his mortal birth,

Like the moon among the planets, born in Vrishni's noble clan,
He whom bright gods render worship,—NARAYANA, Son of Man,

Primal Cause and Self-created, when is done his purpose high,
NARAYANA leads Immortals back unto the radiant sky."

Such bright glimpses of the Secret flashed upon his inner sight,
As in lofty contemplation Narad gazed upon the rite.

IV

The Arghya

Outspake Bhishma to Yudhishtir : "Monarch of this wide domain,
Honour, due to crownéd monarchs, doth our sacred law ordain,

Arghya to the wise Preceptor, to the Kinsman and to Priest,
To the Friend and to the Scholar, to the King as lord of feast, —

Unto these is due the offering, so our holy writs have said,
Therefore to these kings assembled be that regal honour paid,

Noble are these crownéd monarchs, radiant like the noonday sun,
To the noblest, first in virtue, be the foremost honour done ! ”

“Who is noblest,” quoth Yudhishtir, “in this galaxy of fame,
Who of chiefs and crownéd monarchs doth our foremost honour claim ?”

Pond’ring spake the ancient Bhishma in his accents deep and clear :
“Greatest midst the great is Krishna, chief of men without a peer !

Midst these rulers pure in lustre, Krishna stands supreme and high,
Like the sun in peerless splendour midst the planets of the sky,

Sunless climes are warmed to verdure by the sun’s returning ray,
Windless wastes are waked to gladness when reviving breezes play,

Even so this festive gathering, this thy sacrificial rite,
Owes its sanctity and lustre unto Krishna’s holy might !”

Bhishma spake and Sahadeva served his mandate quick as thought,
And the *arghya* duly flavoured unto peerless Krishna brought,

Krishna trained in rules of virtue then the holy offering took,
Darkened Sisupala’s forehead and his frame in tremor shook,

To Yudhishtir and to Bhishma turns the chief his flaming eyes,
To the great and honoured Krishna, Sisupala wrathful cries.

V

Sisupala’s Pride

“Not to Vrishni’s uncrowned hero should this reverence be paid,
Midst these mighty crownéd monarchs in their kingly pomp arrayed !

Ill beseems the good Yudhishtir, royal Pandu's royal son,
This obeisance to a chieftain, to the low this honour done,

But the untaught sons of Pandu's are with knowledge yet unblessed,
Knowing Bhishma in his wisdom hath the rules of courts transgressed,

Learnéd in the Laws of Duty he hath sinned from partial love,
Conscious breach of rules of honour doth our deeper hatred move,

For amidst these crownéd monarchs, ruling kings of righteous fame,
Ne'er this uncrowned Vrishni chieftain can the foremost honour claim !

Doth he as a sage and elder claim the homage to him done ?
Sure his father Vasudeva hath his claims before his son !

Doth he as Yudhishtir's kinsman count as foremost and the best ?
Royal Drupad by alliance surely might the claim contest !

Doth he as a wise preceptor claim the first and foremost place,
When the great preceptor Drona doth this royal mansion grace ?

Unto Krishna as a *rishi* should the foremost rank be given ?
Saintly Vyasa claims the honour, Vedic bard inspired by Heaven !

Unto Krishna should we render honour for his warlike fame ?
Thou O Bhishma ! Death's Subduer, surely might precedence claim !

Unto Krishna for his knowledge should the noble prize we yield ?
Drona's son unmatched in learning surely might contest the field !

Great Duryodhan midst the princes stands alone, without a peer,
Kripa priest of royal Kurus, holiest of all priests, is here,

Archer Karna—braver archer none there is of mortal birth—
Learnt his arms from Par'su Rama, him who slew the kings of earth,

Wherefore then to unknown Krishna render we thus homage free ?
Saintly priest nor wise preceptor, king nor foremost warrior he !

VI

Sisupala's Fall

Tiger-hearted Sisupala spake in anger stern and high,
 Calm unto him Krishna answered, but a light was in his eye :

"List O chiefs and righteous monarchs ! from a daughter of our race
 Evil-destined Sisupala doth his noble lineage trace,

Spite of wrong and frequent outrage, spite of insult often flung,
 Never in his heart hath Krishna sought to do his kinsman wrong !

Once I went to eastern regions, Sisupala like a foe
 Burnt my far-famed seaport Dwarka, laid its mart and temple low ;

Once on Bhoja's trusting monarch faithless Sisupala fell,
 Slew his men and threw him captive in his castle's dungeon cell ;

Once for holy *aswamedha* Vasudeva sent his steed,
 Sisupala stole the charger, sought to stop the righteous deed ;

Once on saintly Babhru's consort, false betrayer of his trust,
 Sisupala fell in madness, forced the lady to his lust ;

Once Visala's beauteous princess went to seek her husband's side,
 In her husband's garb dissembled, Sisupala clasped the bride ;

This and more hath Krishna suffered, for his mother is our kin,
 But the sickening tale appalleth, and he addeth sin to sin !

One more tale of sin I mention ; by his impious passion fired,
 To my saintly wife, Rukmini, Sisupala hath aspired,

As the low-horn seeks the *Keda*, soiling it with impure breath,
 Sisupala sought my consort, and his righteous doom is Death !"

Krishna spake ; the rising red blood mantled o'er each royal brow
 As the kings in shame and anger heard of deeds so base and low,

But the heedless Sisupala spake with bitter taunt and jeer,
 Answered Krishna's lofty menace with disdain and cruel sneer :

"Wherefore in this vast assembly thus proclaim thy tale of shame,
 If thy wedded wife and consort did inspire my youthful flame ?

Wherefore, if possessed of honour, blest with wisdom and with pride
 Thus proclaim that once thy consort was another's cherished bride ?

Do thy worst ! Or if by anger or by coward meekness led,
 Sisupala seeks no mercy, nor doth Krishna's anger dread !"

Lowered Krishna's eye and forehead, and unto his hands there came
 Fatal disc, the dread of sinners, disc that never missed its aim,

"Monarchs in this hall assembled !" Krishna in his anger cried,
 "Oft hath Chedi's impious ruler Krishna's noble rage defied,

For unto his pious mother plighted word and troth was given,
 Sisupala's hundred follies would by Krishna be forgiven,

I have kept the plighted promise, but his crimes exceed the tale,—
 Now the sinner reaps his harvest, let the laws of heaven prevail !"

Then the bright and whirling discus, as this mandate Krishna said,
 Fell on impious Sisupala, from his body smote his head,

Fell the mighty-armed monarch like a thunder-riven rock,
 Severed from the parent mountain by the bolt's resistless shock !

And his soul be-cleansed of passions came forth from its mortal shroud,
 Like the radiant sun in splendour from a dark and mantling cloud,

Unto Krishna good and gracious, like a lurid spark aflame,
 Chastened of its sin and anger, Sisupala's spirit came !

Rain descends in copious torrents, quick the lurid lightnings fly,
 And the wide earth feels a tremor, restless thunders shake the sky,

Various feelings sway the monarchs as they stand in hushed amaze,
 And in mute and speechless horror on the lifeless warrior gaze !

Some there are who seek their weapons, and their nervous fingers shake,
And their lips they bite in anger, and their frames in tremor quake,

Others in their inmost bosom welcome Krishna's righteous deed,
Look on death of Sisupala as a sinner's proper meed,

Krishis bless the deed of Krishna as they wend their various ways,
Brahmans pure and pious-hearted chant the righteous Krishna's praise.

Sid Yudhishtir, gentle-hearted, then unto his brothers said :
" Funeral rites and regal honours let us render to the dead,"

Dateously his faithful brothers rendered every pious rite,
Honours due to Chedi's monarch, homage to his peerless might,

Sisupala's son they seated in his mighty father's place,
And with holy *abhisheka* hailed him king of Chedi's race.

VII

Yudhishtir Emperor

Every hind'rance thus surmounted, to the holy sacrifice
Good Yudhishtir bent his purpose with his gifts of gold and rice,

Godlike Krishna watched benignly with his bow and disc and mace,
And Yudhishtir closed the feasting with his kindliness and grace.

Brahmans sprinkled holy water on the empire's righteous lord,
All the monarchs made obeisance, spake in sweet and graceful word :

" Born of race of Ajamidha ! thou hast spread thy father's fame,
Rising by thy native virtue thou hast won a mightier name,

And this rite unto thy station doth a holier grace instil,
And thy royal grace and kindness all our hope and wish fulfil,

Grant us, first of mighty monarchs, now unto our realms we go,
King of kings and earthly rulers ! parting grace on us bestow !"

Good Yudhishtir to the monarchs parting grace and honours paid,
And unto his duteous brothers thus in loving kindness said :

"To our feast these noble rulers came from loyal love they bear,
Far as confines of their kingdoms with them let our friends repair."

And his brothers and his kinsmen duteously his best obey,
With each parting guest and monarch journey on the homeward way,

Arjun wends with high-souled Drupad, famed for lofty warlike grace,
Dhrishta-dyumna with Virata, monarch of the Matsya race,

Bhima on the ancient Bhishma and on Kuru's king doth wait,
Sahadeva waits on Drona, great in arms, in virtue great,

With Gandhara's warlike monarch brave Nakula holds his way,
Other chiefs with other princes where their distant kingdoms lay.

Last of all Yudhishtir's kinsman righteous Krishna fain would part,
And unto the good Yudhishtir opens thus his joyful heart :

"Done this glorious *rajasuya*, joy and pride of Kuru's race,
Grant, O friend ! to sea-girt Dwarka, Krishna now his steps must trace."

"By thy grace and by thy valour," sad Yudhishtir thus replies,
"By thy presence, noble Krishna, I have done this high emprise,

By thy all-subduing glory monarchs bore Yudhishtir's sway,
Came to render costly presents and their tributes rich to pay,

Must thou part ? my uttered accents may not bid thee, friend, to go,
In thy absence vain were empire, and this life were full of woe,

Yet thou partest, sinless Krishna, dearest, best beloved friend,
And to Dwarka's sea-washed mansions must thy distant footsteps bend !"

Then unto Yudhishtir's mother, pious-hearted Krishna hies,
And in accents love-inspiring thus to ancient Pritha cries :

“Regal fame and righteous glory crown thy sons, revered dame,
Joy thee in their peerless prowess, in their holy spotless fame,

May thy sons’ success and triumph cheer a widowed mother’s heart,
Grant me leave, O noble lady ! for to Dwarka I depart.”

From Yudhishtir’s queen Draupadi parts the chief with many a tear,
And from Arjun’s wife Subhadra, Krishna’s sister ever dear,

Then with rites and due ablutions to the gods are offerings made,
Priests repeat their benedictions, for the righteous Krishna said !

And his faithful chariot-driver brings his falcon-bannered car,
Like the clouds in massive splendour, fearful in the field of war,

Pious Krishna mounts the chariot, fondly greets his friends once more,
Leaves blue Jumna’s sacred waters for his Dwarka’s dear-loved shore.

Still Yudhishtir and his brothers, sad and silent, grieved at heart,
Followed Krishna’s moving chariot, for they could not see him part,

Krishna stopped once more his chariot, and his parting blessing gave,
And the chief with eyes of lotus spake in accents calm and brave :

*King of men ! with sleepless watching ever guard thy kingdom fair,
Like a father tend thy subjects with a father’s loving care,*

*Be unto them like the rain-drop nourishing the thirsty ground,
Be unto them tree of shelter shading them from heat around,*

*Like the blue sky ever bending be unto them ever kind,
Free from pride and free from passion rule them with a virtuous mind ! ”*

Spoke and left the saintly Krishna, pure and pious-hearted chief,
Sad Yudhishtir wended homeward and his heart was full of grief.

BOOK IV

DYUTA

(The Fatal Dice)

DURYODHAN came back from the Imperial Sacrifice filled with jealousy against Yudhishtir, and devised plans to effect his fall. Sakuni, prince of Gandhara, shared Duryodhan's hatred towards the sons of Pandu, and helped him in his dark scheme.

Yudhishtir with all his piety and righteousness had one weakness, the love of gambling, which was one of the besetting sins of the monarchs of the day. Sakuni was an expert at false dice, and challenged Yudhishtir, and Yudhishtir held it a point of honour not to decline such a challenge.

He came from his new capital, Indra-prastha to Hastina-pura the capital of Duryodhan, with his mother and brothers and Draupadi. And as Yudhishtir, lost game after game, he was stung with his losses, and with the recklessness of a gambler still went on with the fatal game. His wealth and hoarded gold and jewels, his steeds, elephants and cars, his slaves male and female, his empire and possessions, were all staked and lost !

The madness increased, and Yudhishtir staked his brothers, and then himself, and then the fair Draupadi, and lost ! And thus the Emperor of Indra-prastha and his family were deprived of every possession on earth, and became the bond-slaves of Duryodhan. The old king Dhritarashtra released them from actual slavery, but the five brothers retired to forests as homeless exiles.

Portions of Section lxxv. and the whole of Sections lxxix., lxxvi., and lxxvii. of Book ii. of the original text have been translated in this Book.

I

Draupadi in the Council Hall

Glassed on Ganga's limpid waters brightly shine Hastina's walls,
Queen Draupadi duly honoured lives within the palace halls,

But as steals a lowly jackal in a lordly lion's den,
Base Duryodhan's humble menial came to proud Draupadi's ken.

"Pardon, Empress," quoth the menial, "royal Pandu's righteous son,
Lost his game and lost his reason, lady, thou art staked and won,

Prince Duryodhan claims thee, lady, and the victor bids me say,
Thou shalt serve him as his vassal, and within his palace stay !"

"Have I heard thee, menial, rightly?" questioned she in anguish keen,
"Doth a crowned king and husband stake his wife and lose his queen,

Did my noble lord and monarch sense and reason lose at dice,
Other stake he did not wager, wedded wife to sacrifice !"

"Other stakes were duly wagered," so he spake with bitter groan,
"Wealth and empire, every object which Yudhishtir called his own,

Lost himself and all his brothers, bondsmen are those princes brave,
Then he staked his wife and empress, thou art prince Duryodhan's slave !"

Rose the queen in queenly anger, and with woman's pride she spake :
"Hie thee, menial, to thy master, Queen Draupadi's answer take,

If my lord, himself a bondsman, then hath staked his queen and wife,
False the stake, for owns a bondsman neither wealth nor other's life,

Slave can wager wife nor children, and such action is undone,
Take my word to prince Duryodhan, Queen Draupadi is unwon !"

Wrathful was the proud Duryodhan when he heard the answer bold,
To his younger, fierce Duhsasan, thus his angry mandate told :

"Little-minded is the menial, and his heart in terror fails,
For the fear of wrathful Bhima, lo ! his coward-bosom quails,

Thou Duhsasan, bid the princess as our humble slave appear,
Pandu's sons are humble bondsinen, and thy bosom owns no fear !"

Fierce Duhsasan heard the mandate, blood-shot was his flaming eye,
Forthwith to the inner chambers did with eager footsteps hie,

Proudly sat the fair Draupadi, monarch's daughter, monarch's wife,
Unto her the base Duhsasan spake his message, insult-rife :

"Lotus-eyed Panchala-princess ! fairly staked and won at game,
Come and meet thy lord Duryodhan, chase that mantling blush of shame

Serve us as thy lords and masters, be our beauteous bright-eyed slave,
Come unto the Council Chamber, wait upon the young and brave !"

Proud Draupadi shook with tremor at Duhsasan's hateful sight,
Shaded quick her eye and forehead and her bloodless cheeks were white,

At his words her chaste heart sickened, and with wild averted eye,
Unto rooms where dwelt the women, Queen Draupadi sought to fly,

Vainly sped the trembling princess in her fear and in her shame,
By her long and trailing tresses fierce Duhsasan held the dame !

Sacred locks ! with holy water dewed at *rajasuya* rite,
And by *mantra* consecrated, fragrant, flowing, raven-bright,

Base Duhsasan by those tresses held the faint and flying queen,
Feared no more the sons of Pandu, nor their vengeance fierce and keen,

Dragged her in her slipping garments by her long and trailing hair,
And like sapling, tempest-shaken, shook the princess tall and fair !

stooping in her shame and anguish, pale with wrath and woman's fear,
Trembling and in stifled accents, thus she spake with streaming tear :

"Leave me, shameless prince Duhsasan ! elders, noble lords are here,
Can a modest wedded woman thus in loose attire appear ?"

Vain the words and soft entreaty which the weeping princess made,
Vainly to the gods and mortals she in bitter anguish prayed,

For with cruel words of insult still Duhsasan mocked her woe :
"Loosely clad or void of clothing,—to the Council Hall you go,

Slave-wench fairly staked and conquered, wait upon thy masters brave,
Live among our household menials, serve us as our willing slave !"

II

Draupadi's Plaint

Loose-attired, with trailing tresses, came Draupadi weak and faint,
Stood within the Council Chamber, tearful made her noble plaint :

"Elders ! versed in holy *sastra*, and in every holy rite,
Pardon if Draupadi meets you in this sad unseemly plight,

Stay thy sinful deed, Duhsasan, nameless wrongs and insults spare,
Touch me not with hands uncleanly, sacred is a woman's hair,

Honoured elders, righteous nobles, have on me protection given,
Tremble sinner, seek no mercy from the wrathful gods in heaven !

Here in glory, son of DHARMA, sits my noble wedded lord,
Sin nor shame nor human frailty stains Yudhishtir's deed or word,

Silent all ? and will no chieftain rise to save a woman's life,
Not a hand or voice is lifted to defend a virtuous wife ?

Lost is Kuru's righteous glory, lost is Bharat's ancient name,
Lost is monarch's kingly prowess, warrior's worth and knightly fame,

Wherefore else do Kuru chieftains tamely view this impious scene,
Wherefore gleam not righteous weapons to protect an outraged queen ?

Bhishma, hath he lost his virtue, Drona, hath he lost his might,
Hath the monarch of the Kurus ceased to battle for the right,

Wherefore are ye mute and voiceless, councillors of mighty fame,
Vacant eye and palsied right arm watch this deed of Kuru's shame ?"

III

Insult and Vow of Revenge

Spake Draupadi slender-waisted, and her words were stern and high,
Anger flamed within her bosom and the tear was in her eye,

And her sparkling speaking glances fell on Pandu's sons like fire,
Stirred in them a mighty passion and a thirst for vengeance dire,

Lost their empire, wealth and fortune, little recked they for the fall,
But Draupadi's pleading glances like a poniard smote them all !

Darkly frowned the ancient Bhishma, wrathful Drona bit his tongue,
Pale Vidura marked with anger insults on Draupadi flung,

Fulsome word nor foul dishonour could their truthful utterance taint,
And they cursed Duhsasan's action, when they heard Draupadi's plaint.

But brave Karna, though a warrior,—Arjun's deadly foe was he,—
'Gainst the humbled sons of Pandu spake his scorn in scornful glee :

"Tis no fault of thine, fair princess, fallen to this servile state,
Wife and son rule not their actions, others rule their hapless fate,

Thy Yudhishthir sold his birthright, sold thee at the impious play,
And the wife falls with the husband, and her duty—to obey !

Live thou in this Kuru household, do the Kuru princes' will,
Serve them as thy lords and masters, with thy beauty please them still,

Fair One ! seek another husband who in foolish reckless game
Will not stake a loving consort, will not cast her forth in shame !

For they censure not a woman, when she is a menial slave,
If her woman's fancy wanders to the young and to the brave,

For thy lord is not thy husband, as a slave he hath no wife,
Thou art free with truer lover to enjoy a wedded life,

He whom at the *swayamvara*, thou had'st chose, Panchala's bride,
He hath lost thee, sweet Draupadi, lost his empire and his pride !"

Bhima heard, and quick and fiercely heaved his bosom in his shame,
And his red glance fell on Karna like a tongue of withering flame,

Bound by elder's plighted promise Bhima could not smite in ire,
Looked the painted form of Passion, flaming with an anguish dire !

"King and elder !" uttered Bhima, and his words were few and brave,
"Vain were wrath and righteous anger in the sold and bounden slave,

Would that son of chariot-driver fling on us this insult keen,
Hadst thou, noble king and elder, staked nor freedom nor our queen ?"

Sad Yudhishtir heard in anguish, bent in shame his lowly head,
Proud Duryodhan laughed in triumph, and in scornful accents said :

"Speak, Yudhishtir, for thy brothers own their elder's righteous sway,
Speak, for truth in thee abideth, virtue ever marks thy way,

Hast thou lost thy new-built empire and thy brothers proud and brave,
Hast thou lost thy fair Draupadi, is thy wedded wife our slave ?"

Lip nor eye did move Yudhishtir, hateful truth might not deny,
Karna laughed, but saintly Bhishma wiped his old and manly eye.

Madness seized the proud Duryodhan, and inflamed by passion base,
Sought the prince to stain Draupadi with a deep and dire disgrace,

On the proud and peerless woman cast his wicked lustful eye,
Sought to hold the high-born princess as his slave upon his knee !

Bhima penned his wrath no longer, lightning-like his glance he flung,
And the ancient hall of Kurus with his thunder accents rung :

*"May I never reach those mansions where my fathers live on high,
May I never meet ancestors in the bright and happy sky,*

*If that knee, by which thou sinnest, Bhima breaks not in his ire,
In the battle's red arena with his weapon, deathful, dire !"*

Red fire flamed on Bhima's forehead, sparkled from his angry eye,
As from tough and gnarled branches fast the crackling red sparks fly !

VI

Dhrita-rashtra's Kindness

Hark ! within the sacred chamber, where the priests in white attire
With libations morn and evening feed the sacrificial fire,

And o'er sacred rights of *homa* Brahmans chant their *mantra* high,
There is heard the jackal's wailing and the raven's ominous cry !

Wise Vidura heard the wailing and its fatal import knew,
Bhishma muttered "*svasti ! svasti !*" at this portent strange and new,

Drona and preceptor Kripa uttered too that holy word,
Spake her fears the Queen Gandhari to her spouse and royal lord,

Dhrita-rashtra heard and trembled with a quick and sudden fear,
And his feeble accents quavered, and his eyes were dimmed by tear :

"Son Duryodhan, ever luckless, godless, graceless, witless child,
Hast thou Drupad's virtuous daughter thus insulted and reviled,

But thou courted death and danger, for destruction clouds our path,
In an old man's soft entreaties still avert this sign of wrath?"

Now and gently to Draupadi was the sightless monarch led,
And in kind and gentle accents to the weeping princess said:

Noblest queen and dearest daughter, good Yudhishtir's stainless wife,
First of the Kuru ladies, nearest to my heart and life,

Forgive wrong and cruel insult and avert the wrath of Heaven,
Pardon thy wish and ask for blessing, be my son's misdeed forgiven!"

Answered him the fair Draupadi: "Monarch born of Kuru's line,
For thy grace and for thy mercy every joy on earth be thine,

Since thou bid'st me name my wishes, name the boon I ask of thee,
Grant, my gracious lord Yudhishtir once again be bondage-free!

Have borne a child unto him, noble boy and fair and brave,
He the prince of royal station, not the son of bounden slave,

Let not light unthinking children point to him in utter scorn,
Call him slave and *dasaputra*, of a slave and bondsman born!"

"Virtuous daughter, have thy wishes," thus the ancient monarch cried,
"Name a second boon and blessing, and it shall be gratified!"

"Grant me then, O gracious father, mighty Bhima, Arjun brave,
And the youngest twin-born brothers,—none shall be a bounden slave,

With their arms and with their chariots let the noble princes part,
Let them range the country, strong of hand and stout of heart!"

"Be it so, high-destined princess!" ancient Dhritarashtra cried,
"Name another boon and blessing, and it shall be gratified,

"Dearest of my queenly daughters, dearest-cherished and the best,
Heeding thus thy gentle wishes now I feel my house is blest!"

"Not so," answered him the princess, "other boon I may not seek,
Thou art bounteous, and a woman should be modest, wise and meek.

Twice I asked, and twice you granted, and a Kshatra asks no more,
Unto Brahmans it is given, asking favours evermore,

Now my lord and warlike brothers, from their hateful bondage freed,
Seek their fortune by their prowess and by brave and virtuous deed !

V

The Banishment

Now Yudhishtir 'rest of empire, far from kinsmen, hearth and home,
With his wife and faithful brothers must as houseless exiles roam,

Parting blessings spake Yudhishtir, "Elder of the Kuru line,
Noble grandsire, stainless Bhishma, may thy glories ever shine,

Drona priest and great preceptor, saintly Kripa true and brave,
Kuru's monarch Dhritarashtra, may the gods thy empire save,

Good Vidura true and faithful, may thy virtue serve thee well,
Warlike sons of Dhritarashtra, let me bid you all farewell !"

So he spake unto his kinsmen, wishing good for evil done,
And in silent shame they listened, parting words they uttered none !

Pained at heart was good Vidura, and he asked in sore distress :
"Noble Pritha, will she wander in the pathless wilderness ?

Royal-born, unused to hardship, weak and long unused to roam,
Aged is thy saintly mother, let fair Pritha stay at home,

And by all beloved, respected, in my house shall Pritha dwell,
Till your years of exile over, ye shall greet her safe and well."

answered him the sons of Pandu : "Be it even as you say,
to us thou art a father, we as sons thy will obey,

Give us then thy holy blessings, friend and father, ere we part,
Blessings from the true and righteous brace the feeble, fainting heart."

Take Vidura, pious-hearted : "Best of Bharat's ancient race,
Let me bless thee and thy brothers, souls of truth and righteous grace,

Fortune brings no weal to mortals who may win by wicked wile,
Grief brings no shame to mortals who are free from sin and guile !

Thou art trained in laws of duty, Arjun is unmatched in war,
And on Bhima in the battle kindly shines his faithful star,

And the Twins excel in wisdom, born to rule a mighty State,
For Draupadi, ever faithful, wins the smiles of fickle Fate !

Each with varied gifts encircled, each beloved of one and all,
Shall win a spacious empire, greater, mightier, after fall,

And your exile, good Yudhishtir, is ordained to serve your weal,
A trial and *samadhi*, for it chastens but to heal !

For taught thee righteous maxims where Himalay soars above,
And in Varnavata's forest Vyasa spoke of holy love,

Bhishma taught thee laws of duty far on Bhṛigu's lofty hill,
And Abhishu showed the path of virtue by fair Drisad-vati's rill,

And from lips of saint Asita words of wisdom deep and grave,
And Bhṛigu touched with fire thy bosom by the dark Kalmashi's wave !

For once more the teaching cometh, purer, brighter, oftener taught,
For the truth from heavenly Narad, happy is thy mortal lot,

Greater than the son of Ila, than the kings of earth in might,
Greater than the holy *rishis*, be thou in thy virtue bright !

For I shall help thee in thy battles, proud subduer of mankind,
For I shall aid thee in the mightier duty, in the conquest of thy mind,

Good KUVERA teach thee kindness, hungry and the poor to feed,
Great VARNUA quell thy passions, free thy heart from sin and greed,

Like the Moon in holy lustre, like the Earth in patience deep,
Like the Sun be full of radiance, strong like Wind's resistless sweep!

In thy sorrow, in affliction, ever deeper lessons learn,
Righteous be your life in exile, happy be your safe return,

May these eyes again behold thee in Hastina's ancient town,
Conqueror of earthly trials, crowned with virtue's heavenly crown !”

Spake Vidura to the brothers and they felt their might increase,
Bowed to him in salutation, filled with deeper, holier peace,

Bowed to Bhishma and to Drona, and to chiefs and elders all,
Exiles to the pathless jungle, left their father's ancient hall !

VI

Pritha's Lament

In the inner palace chambers where the royal ladies dwell,
Unto Pritha came Draupadi, came to speak her sad farewell,

Monarch's daughter, monarch's consort, as an exile she must go,
Pritha wept, and in the chambers rose the wailing voice of woe !

Heaving sobs convulsed her bosom as a silent prayer she prayed,
And in accents choked by anguish thus her parting words she said :

“Grieve not, child, if bitter fortune so ordains that we must part,
Virtue hath her consolations for the true and loving heart,

And I need not tell thee, daughter, duties of a faithful wife,
Drupad's and thy husband's mansions thou hast brightened by thy life

ly from the sinning Kurus thou hast turned thy righteous wrath,
ly, with a mother's blessing, tread the trackless jungle path,

ngers bring no woe or sorrow to the true and faithful wife,
less deed and dauntless virtue ever guard her charmed life,

se thy lord with woman's kindness, and his brothers where ye go,
ing in years is Sahadeva, gentle and unused to woe !"

ay thy blessings help me, mother," so the fair Draupadi said,
fe in righteous truth and virtue, forest path we fearless tread !"

t her eyes and loose her tresses, fair Draupadi bowed and left,
cient Pritha weeping followed, of all earthly joy bereft,

she went, her duteous children now before their mother came,
d in garments of the deer-skin, and their heads were bent in shame !

row welling in her bosom choked her voice and filled her eye,
in broken stifled accents faintly thus did Pritha cry :

er true to path of duty, ever free from sin and stain,
e to gods, to mortals faithful, wherefore comes to you this pain ?

efore hath untimely sorrow like a darksome cloud above,
t its pale and deathful shadow on the children of my love ?

e to me, your wretched mother, woe to her who gave you birth,
nless sons, for sins of Pritha have ye suffered on this earth ?

ll ye range the pathless forest dreary day and darksome night,
t of all save native virtue, clad in native, inborn might ?

e to me, from rocky mountains where I dwelt by Pandu's side,
en I lost him, to Hastina wherefore came I in my pride ?

ppy in your sainted father in the regions of the sky,
nor feels these earthly sorrows gathering on us thick and high,

ppy too is faithful Madri, for she trod the virtuous way,
lowed Pandu to the bright sky, and is now his joy and stay !

Ye alone are left to Pritha, dear unto her joyless heart,
Mother's hope and widow's treasure, and ye may not, shall not part,

Leave me not alone on wide earth, loving sons, your virtues prove,
Dear Draupadi, thee my daughter, let a mother's tear-drops move,

Grant me mercy, great Creator, and my days in mercy close,
End my sorrows, kind VIDHATA, end my life with all my woes !

Help me, pious-hearted Krishna, friend of friendless, joyless men,
All who suffer pray unto thee and they never pray in vain,

Help me, Bhishma, warlike Drona, Kripa ever good and wise,
Ye are friends of truth and virtue, righteous truth ye ever prize,

Help me from thy starry mansions, husband, wherefore dost thou wait,
Seest thou not thy godlike children exiled by a bitter fate ?

Part not, leave me not, my children, seek ye not the trackless way,
Stay but one, if one child only, as your mother's hope and stay,

Youngest, gentlest Sahadeva, dearest to this widowed heart,
Wilt thou watch beside thy mother, while thy cruel brothers part ? ”

Whispering words of consolation, Pritha's children wipe her tear,
Then unto the pathless jungle turn their footsteps lone and drear,

Kuru dames with fainting Pritha to the palace chambers hie,
Kuru damsels for the princess raise their voice in answering cry !

Maid and matron for Draupadi fortune's fitful will upbraid,
And their tear-dewed lotus-faces with their streaming fingers shade,

Even mighty Dhrita-rashtra is by sad misgivings pained,
Questions oft with anxious terror what the cruel fates ordained,

BOOK V

PATIVRATA--MAHATMYA

(*Woman's Love*)

TRUE to their word the sons of Pandu went with Draupadi to exile, and passed twelve years in the wilderness ; and many were the incidents which checkered their forest life. Krishna, who had been banished by Yudhishthir in his prosperity, now came to visit him in his adversity ; he consoled Draupadi in her distress, and gave good advice to the brothers. Draupadi with a woman's pride and anger thought of her wrongs and insults, and urged Yudhishthir to disregard the conditions of exile and recover his kingdom. Bhishma was of the same mind, but Yudhishthir would not be moved from his plighted word.

The great *rishi* Vyasa came to visit Yudhishthir, and advised Arjun, great archer as he was, to acquire celestial arms by penance and worship. Arjun followed the advice, met the god SIVA in the guise of a hunter, pleased him by his prowess in combat, and obtained his blessings and the *pasupata* weapon. Arjun then went to INDRA's heaven and obtained other celestial arms.

In the meanwhile Duryodhan, not content with sending his cousins to exile, wished to humiliate them still more by appearing before them in all his regal power and splendour. Matters however turned out differently from what he expected, and he became involved in a quarrel with some *gandharvas*, a class of aerial beings. Duryodhan was taken captive by them, and it was the Pandav brothers who released him from his captivity, and allowed him to return to his kingdom in peace. This act of generosity rankled in his bosom and deepened his hatred.

Jayadratha, king of Sindhu or Indus country, and a friend

and ally of Duryodhan, came to the woods, and in the absence of the Pandav brothers carried off Draupadi. The Pandavs however pursued the king, chastised him for his misconduct, and rescued Draupadi.

Still more interesting than these various incidents are the tales and legends with which this book is replete. Great saints came to see Yudhishtir in his exile, and narrated to him legends of ancient times and of former kings. One of these beautiful episodes, the tale of Nala and Damayanti, has been translated into graceful English verse by Dean Milman, and is known to many English readers. The legend of Agastya who drained the ocean dry, Parasu-Rama a Brahman who killed the Kshatriyas of the earth, of Bhagiratha who brought down the Ganges from the skies to earth; of Manu and the universal deluge; of Vishnu and various other gods; of Rama and his deeds which form the subject of the Epic *Ramayana* :—these and various other legends have been woven in the account of the forest-life of the Pandavs, and make a veritable storehouse of ancient Hindu tales and traditions.

Among these various legends and tales I have selected one which is singular and striking. The great truth proclaimed under the guise of an eastern allegory is that a True Woman's Love is not conquered by Death. The story is known to Hindu women of all ranks and low, rich and poor, in all parts of India; and on a certain night in the year millions of Hindu women celebrate a festival in honour of the woman whose love was not conquered by death. Legends like these, though they take away from the unity and conciseness of the Epic, impart moral instruction to the millions of India the value of which cannot be overestimated.

The portion translated in this Book forms Sections ccxcii., ccxciii., a part of Section ccxciv. and Sections ccxcv. and ccxcvi. of Book iii. of the original text.

I

Forest Life.

he dark and pathless forest long the Pandav brothers strayed,
 he bosom of the jungle long the fair Draupadi stayed,

they killed the forest red-deer, hewed the gnarled forest wood,
 she fetched the limpid water, cooked the humble daily food.

he morn she swept the cottage, lit the cheerful fire at eve,
 at night in lonesome silence oft her woman's heart would grieve,

its rankled in her bosom and her tresses were unbound,—
 he vowed,—till fitting vengeance had the base insulters found.

hen evening's shades descended, mantling o'er the wood and lea,
 a Draupadi by the cottage cooked the food beneath the tree,

is came to good Yudhishtir, sat beside his evening fires,
 y olden tales recited, legends of our ancient sires.

andeya, holy *rishi*, once unto Yudhishtir came,
 n his heart was sorrow-laden with the memories of his shame,

don, father !" said Yudhishtir, "if unbidden tears will start,
 the woes of fair Draupadi grieve a banished husband's heart,

er tears the saintly woman broke my bondage worse than death,
 y sins she suffers exile and misfortune's freezing breath !

thou, sage and saintly *rishi*, know of wife or woman born,
 ch nameless sorrow smitten, by such strange misfortune torn,

thou in thy ancient legends heard of true and faithful wife,
 a stronger wife's affection, with a sadder woman's life ?"

en, monarch !" said the *rishi*, "to a tale of ancient date,
 Savitri loved and suffered, how she strove and conquered Fate !"

II

The Tale of Savitri

In the country of fair Madra lived a king in days of old,
Faithful to the holy BRAHMA, pure in heart and righteous-souled,

He was loved in town and country, in the court and hermit's den,
Sacrificer to the bright gods, helper to his brother men,

But the monarch, Aswapati, son or daughter had he none,
Old in years and sunk in anguish, and his days were almost done !

Vows he took and holy penance, and with pious rules conformed,
Spare in diet as *brahmachari* long and arduous rites performed,

Sang the sacred hymn *Savitri*, to the gods oblations gave,
Through the livelong day he fasted, uncomplaining, meek and brave !

Year by year he gathered virtue, rose in merit and in might,
Till the goddess of *Savitri* smiled upon his sacred rite,

From the fire upon the altar which a holy radiance flung,
In the form of beauteous maiden, goddess of *Savitri* sprung !

And she spake in gentle accents, blessed the monarch good and brave,
Blessed his rites and holy penance and a boon unto him gave :

"Penance and thy sacrifices can the Powers Immortal move,
And the pureness of thy conduct doth thy heart's affection prove,

Ask thy boon, king Aswapati, from creation's Ancient Sire,
True to virtue's sacred mandate speak thy inmost heart's desire."

"For an offspring brave and kingly," so the saintly king replied,
"Holy rites and sacrifices and this penance I have tried,

If these rites and sacrifices move thy favour and thy grace,
Grant me offspring, Prayer-Maiden, worthy of my noble race."

ave thy object," spake the Maiden, "Madra's pious-hearted king,
 om SWAYMBHU, Self-created, blessings unto thee I bring,

r HE lists to mortal's prayer springing from a heart like thine,
 d HE wills,—a noble daughter grace thy famed and royal line,

wapati, glad and grateful, take the blessing which I bring,
 rt in joy and part in silence, bow unto Creation's King!"

nished then the Prayer-Maiden, and the king of noble fame,
 wapati, Lord of coursers, to his royal city came,

ys of hope and nights of gladness Madra's happy monarch passed,
 l his queen of noble offspring gladsome promise gave at last !

the moon each night increaseth chasing world-encircling gloom,
 ew the unborn babe in splendour in its happy mother's womb,

nd in fulness of the season came a girl with lotus-eye,
 ther's hope and joy of mother, gift of kindly gods on high !

nd the king performed its birth-rites with a glad and grateful mind,
 nd the people blessed the dear one with their wishes good and kind,

s *Savitri*, Prayer-Maiden, had the beauteous offspring given,
 rahmans named the child *Savitri*, holy gift of bounteous Heaven !

rew the child in brighter beauty like a goddess from above,
 nd each passing spring-time added fresher sweetness, deeper love,

ame with youth its lovelier graces, as the buds their leaves unfold,
 ender waist and rounded bosom, image as of burnished gold,

era-Kanya ! born a goddess, so they said in all the land,
 incely suitors struck with wonder ventured not to seek her hand.

ears went by ; and once it happened on a bright and festive day,
 resh from bath the beauteous maiden to the altar came to pray,

nd with cakes and pure libations duly fed the Sacred Flame,
 hen like *SRI* in heavenly radiance to her royal father came.

And she bowed to him in silence, sacred flowers beside him laid,
And her hands she folded meekly, sweetly her obeisance made,

With a father's pride and pleasure smiled the ruler of the land,
But a strain of sadness lingered, for no suitor claimed her hand.

"Daughter," whispered Aswapati, "now, methinks, the time is come,
Thou shouldst choose a princely suitor, grace a royal husband's home

Choose thyself a noble husband worthy of thy noble hand,
Choose a true and upright monarch, pride and glory of his land,

As thou chooseth, gentle daughter, in thy loving heart's desire,
Thou shalt have thy king's approval and the blessings of thy sire.

For our sacred *sastras* sanction, holy Brahmins oft relate,
That the duty-loving father sees his girl in wedded state,

That the duty-loving husband watches o'er his consort's ways,
That the duty-loving offspring tends his mother's widowed days,

Therefore choose a loving husband, daughter of my house and love,
So thy father earn no censure or from men or gods above."

Fair Savitri bowed unto him and for parting blessings prayed,
Then she left her father's palace and in distant regions strayed,

With her guard and aged courtiers whom her watchful father sent,
Mounted on her golden chariot unto sylvan woodlands went.

Far in pleasant grove and jungle wandered she from day to day,
Unto *asrams*, hermitages, piously she held her way,

And she stayed in holy *tirthas* washed by sacred limpid streams,
Food she gave unto the hungry, wealth beyond their fondest dreams.

Many days and months were over, and it once did so befall,
When the king and *rishi* Narad sat within the royal hall,

From her journeys near and distant and from places known to fame,
Fair Savitri with the courtiers to her father's palace came,

Came and saw her royal father, *rishi* Narad by his seat,
Bent her head in salutation, bowed unto their holy feet.

III

The Fated Bridegroom

"Whence comes she," so Narad questioned, "whither was Savitri led,
Therefore to a happy husband hath the maiden not been wed?"

"Nay, to choose her lord and husband," so the virtuous monarch said,
Fair Savitri long hath wandered and in holy *tirthas* stayed."

And the monarch bade the maiden then her choice and secret tell,
And a blush suffused her forehead, soft and slow her accents fell !

Listen, father ! Salwa's monarch was of old a king of might,
Righteous-hearted Dyumat-sena, feeble now and void of sight,

Boemen robbed him of his kingdom when in age he lost his sight,
And from town and spacious empire was the monarch forced to flight,

With his queen and with his infant did the feeble exile stray,
And the jungle was his palace, darksome was his weary way !

Holy vows assumed the monarch and in penance passed his life,
In the wild woods nursed his infant and with wild fruits fed his wife,

Years have gone in rigid penance, and that child is now a youth,
Him I choose my lord and husband, Satyavan, the Soul of Truth !"

Thoughtful was the *rishi* Narad, doleful were the words he said ;
Sad disaster waits Savitri to this youth if she were wed,

Truth-beloving is his father, truthful is the royal dame,
Truth and virtue rule his actions, Satyavan his sacred name,

Needs he loved in days of boyhood and to paint them was his joy,
Hence they called him young Chitraswa, art-beloving gallant boy,

But O pious-hearted monarch ! fair Savitri hath in sooth
Courtèd Fate and dark disaster in that noble gallant youth !"

"Tell me," questioned Aswapati, "for I may not guess thy thought,
Wherefore is my daughter's action with a sad disaster fraught,

Is the youth of noble lustre, gifted in the gifts of art,
Blest with wisdom and with prowess, patient in his dauntless heart?"

"SURYA'S lustre in him shineth," so the *rishi* Narad said,
"BRIHASPATI'S wit and wisdom in the youthful prince's head,

Like MAHENDRA in his prowess, and in patience like the Earth,
Yet O king! a dark disaster marks the gentle youth from birth!"

"Tell me, *rishi*, then thy reason," so the anxious monarch cried,
"Why to youth so great and gifted may this maid be not allied,

Is he princely in his bounty, gentle-hearted in his grace,
Duly versed in sacred knowledge, fair in mind and fair in face?"

"Free in gifts like Rantideva," so the holy *rishi* said,
"Versed in lore like monarch Sivi who all ancient monarchs led,

Like Yayati open-hearted and like CHANDRA in his grace,
Like the handsome heavenly ASVINS fair and radiant in his face,

Richly graced with patient virtue he controls his noble mind,
Modest in his kindly actions, true to friends and ever kind,

And the hermits of the forest praise him for his righteous truth,
Nathless, king, thy daughter may not wed this noble-hearted youth!"

"Tell me, *rishi*," said the monarch, "for thy sense from me is hid,
Has this prince some fatal blemish, wherefore is this match forbid?"

"Fatal fault!" exclaimed the *rishi*, "fault that wipeth all his grace,
Fault that human power nor effort, rite nor penance can efface,

Fatal fault or destined sorrow! for it is decreed on high,
On this day, a twelve-month later, this ill-fated prince will die!"

Shook the startled king in terror and in fear and trembling cried:
'Unto short-lived, fated bridegroom ne'er my child shall be allied,

he, Savitri, dear-loved maiden, choose another happier lord,
 hi Narad speaketh wisdom, list unto his holy word,

ery grace and every virtue is effaced by cruel Fate,
 this day, a twelve-month later, leaves the prince his mortal state !”

ather !” answered thus the maiden, soft and sad her accents fell,
 have heard thy honoured mandate, holy Narad counsels well,

*ardon witless maiden's fancy, but beneath the eye of Heaven,
 ly once a maiden chooseth, twice her troth may not be given,*

*ng his life or be it narrow, and his virtues great or none,
 tyavan is still my husband, he my heart and troth hath won,*

*that a maiden's heart hath chosen that a maiden's lips confess,
 ue to him thy poor Savitri goes into the wilderness !”*

Monarch !” uttered then the *rishi*, “fixed is she in mind and heart,
 on her troth the true Savitri never, never will depart,

ore than mortal's share of virtue unto Satyavan is given,
 t the true maid wed her chosen, leave the rest to gracious Heaven !”

ishi and preceptor holy !” so the weeping monarch prayed,
 leaven avert all future evils, and thy mandate is obeyed !”

rad wished him joy and gladness, blessed the loving youth and maid,
 rest hermits on their wedding every fervent blessing laid.

IV

Overtaken by Fate

welve-month in the darksome forest by her true and chosen lord,
 eet Savitri served his parents by her thought and deed and word,

ark of tree supplied her garments draped upon her bosom fair,
 t the red cloth as in *asrams* holy women love to wear,

And the aged queen she tended with a fond and filial pride,
Served the old and sightless monarch like a daughter by his side,

And with love and gentle sweetness pleased her husband and her lord
But in secret, night and morning, pondered still on Narad's word !

Nearer came the fatal morning by the holy Narad told,
Fair Savitri reckoned daily and her heart was still and cold,

Three short days remaining only ! and she took a vow severe
Of *triratna*, three nights' penance, holy fasts and vigils drear.

Of Savitri's rigid penance heard the monarch in his woe,
Spake to her in loving accents, so the vow she might forego :

"Hard the penance, gentle daughter, and thy woman's limbs are frail
After three nights' fasts and vigils sure thy tender health may fail,"

"Be not anxious, loving father," meekly thus Savitri prayed,
"Penance I have undertaken, will unto the gods be made."

Much misdoubting then the monarch gave his sad and slow assent,
Pale with fast and unseen tear-drops, lonesome nights Savitri spent,

Nearer came the fatal morning, and to-morrow he shall die,
Dark the hours of nightly silence ! tearless, sleepless was her eye !

"Dawns that dread and fated morning !" sad Savitri, bloodless, brave
Prayed her fervent prayers in silence, to the Fire oblations gave,

Bowed unto the forest Brahmins, to the parents kind and good,
Joined her hands in salutation and in reverent silence stood.

With the usual morning blessing, "*Widow may'st thou never be,*"
Anchorites and aged Brahmins blessed Savitri fervently,

O ! that blessing fell upon her like the rain on thirsty air,
Struggling hope inspired her bosom as she drank those accents fair,

But returned the dark remembrance of the *rishi* Narad's word,
Pale she watched the creeping sunbeams, mused upon her fated lord !

laughter, now thy fast is over," so the loving parents said,
 "Make thy diet after penance, for thy morning prayers are prayed,"

"Gardon, father," said Savitri, "let this other day be done,"
 "Washed tear-drops filled her eyelids, glistened in the morning sun !

"Arjavan, sedate and stately, ponderous axe on shoulder hung,
 "For the distant darksome jungle issued forth serene and strong,

"But unto him came Savitri and in sweetest accents prayed,
 "As upon his manly bosom gently she her forehead laid :

"Long I wished to see the jungle where steals not the solar ray,
 "Take me to the darksome forest, husband, let me go to-day !"

"Come not, love," he sweetly answered with a loving husband's care,
 "Thou art all unused to labour, forest paths thou may'st not dare,

"And with recent fasts and vigils pale and bloodless is thy face,
 "And thy steps are weak and feeble, jungle paths thou may'st not trace."

"Fasts and vigils make me stronger," said the wife with wifely pride,
 "Toil I shall not feel nor languor when my lord is by my side,

"For I feel a woman's longing with my lord to trace the way,
 "Grant me, husband ever gracious, with thee let me go to-day !"

"Answered then the loving husband, won by sweet Savitri's love,
 "Ask then, sweet one, of my parents if in forests thou must rove !"

"Then Savitri to the monarch urged her new and strange request,
 "And with duteous salutation thus her humble prayer address :

"To the jungle goes my husband, fuel and the fruit to seek,
 "Would follow if my mother and my loving father speak,

"Twelve-month from this narrow *asram* hath Savitri stepped nor strayed,
 "In this cottage true and faithful with her parents ever stayed,

"For the sacrificial fuel wends my lord his lonesome way,
 "If it please my gracious parents, I would follow him to-day !"

"Never since her wedding morning," so the loving king replied,
"Wish or thought Savitri whispered, for a boon or object sighed,

Daughter, thy request is granted, safely in the forest roam,
Safely with thy lord and husband seek again thy cottage home."

Bowing to her honoured parents did the fair Savitri part,
Smile upon her pallid features, anguish in her inmost heart,

Round her sylvan greenwoods blossomed 'neath a cloudless Indian sky,
Flocks of pea-fowls gorgeous plumaged flew before her wondering eye,

Woodland rills and crystal nullahs gently roll'd o'er rocky bed,
Flower-decked hills in dewy brightness towering glittered overhead,

Birds of song and beauteous feather trilled a note in every grove,
Sweeter accents fell upon her, from her husband's lips of love !

Still with thoughtful eye Savitri watched her dear and fated lord,
Flail of grief was in her bosom but her pale lips shaped no word,

And she listened to her husband still on anxious thought intent,
Cleft in two her throbbing bosom as in silence still she went !

Daily with the gathered wild-fruits did the prince his basket fill,
Hewed the interlacéd branches with his might and practised skill,

Till the drops stood on his forehead, weary was his aching head,
Faint he came unto Savitri and in faltering accents said :

"Cruel ache is on my forehead, fond and ever faithful wife,
And I feel a hundred needles pierce me and torment my life,

And my feeble footsteps falter and my senses seem to reel,
Fain would I beside thee linger for a sleep doth o'er me steal."

With a wild and speechless terror pale Savitri held her lord,
On her lap his head she rested as she laid him on the sward,

d's fatal words remembered as she watched her husband's head,
 ling lip and pallid forehead and the dark and creeping shade,
 bed him in her beating bosom, kissed his lips with panting breath,
 er grew the lonesome forest, and he slept the sleep of death !

V

Triumph over Fate

he bosom of the shadows rose a Vision dark and dread,
 be of gloom in inky garment and a crown was on his head,
 ming Form of sable splendour, blood-red was his sparkling eye,
 a fatal noose he carried, grim and godlike, dark and high !
 he stood in solemn silence, looked in silence on the dead,
 Savitri on the greensward gently placed her husband's head,
 a tremor shook Savitri, but a woman's love is strong,
 n her hands upon her bosom thus she spake with quivering tongue :
 ore than mortal is thy glory ! If a radiant god thou be,
 me what bright name thou bearest, what thy message unto me."
 ow me," thus responded YAMA, "mighty monarch of the dead,
 tals leaving earthly mansion to my darksome realms are led,
 e a woman's full affection thou unto thy lord hast given,
 ce in person, faithful woman, I appear by will of heaven,
 his days and loves are ended, and he leaves his faithful wife,
 his noose I bind and carry spark of his immortal life,
 he graced his life and action, spotless was his princely heart,
 ce for him I came in person, princess, let thy husband part,"
 A from the prince's body, pale and bloodless, cold and dumb,
 w the vital spark, *purusha*, smaller than the human thumb,

In his noose the spark he fastened, silent went his darksome way,
Left the body shorn of lustre to its rigid cold decay.

Southward went the dark-hued YAMA with the youth's immortal life,
And, for woman's love abideth, followed still the faithful wife,

"Turn Savitri," outspake YAMA, "for thy husband loved and lost,
Do the rites due unto mortals by their Fate predestined crost,

For thy wifely duty ceases, follow not in fruitless woe,
And no farther living creature may with monarch YAMA go !"

"But I may not choose but follow where thou takest my husband's life
For Eternal Law divides not loving man and faithful wife,

For a woman's true affection, for a woman's sacred woe,
Grant me in thy godlike mercy farther still with him I go !

Fourfold are our human duties : first to study holy lore,
Then to live as good householders, feed the hungry at our door,

Then to pass our days in penance, last to fix our thoughts above,
But the goal of life and duty, it is Truth and deathless Love !"

"True and holy are thy precepts," listening YAMA made reply,
"And they fill my heart with gladness and with pious purpose high,

I would bless thee, fair Savitri, but the dead come not to life,
Ask for other boon and blessing, faithful true and virtuous wife !"

"Since you so permit me, YAMA," so the good Savitri said,
"For my husband's banished father let my dearest suit be made,

Sightless in the darksome forest dwells the monarch faint and weak
Grant him sight and grant him vigour, YAMA, in thy mercy speak !"

"Duteous daughter," YAMA answered, "be thy pious wishes given,
And his eyes shall ope rejoicing to the cheerful light of heaven,

Turn, Savitri, faint and weary, follow not in fruitless woe,
And no farther living creature may with monarch YAMA go !"

Not nor weary is Savitri," so the noble princess said,
 Since she waits upon her husband, gracious Monarch of the dead,

What befalls the wedded husband still befalls the faithful wife,
 Where he leads she ever follows, be it death or be it life !

And our sacred writ ordaineth and our pious *rishis* sing,
 Transient meeting with the holy doth its countless blessings bring,

Anger friendship with the holy purifies the mortal birth,
 Loving union with the holy is the bright sky on the earth,

Union with the pure and holy is immortal heavenly life,
 Eternal Law divides not loving man and faithful wife !"

"Blesséd are thy words," said YAMA, "blesséd is thy pious thought,
 In a higher purer wisdom are thy holy lessons fraught,

I could bless thee, fair Savitri, but the dead come not to life,
 Seek for other boon and blessing, faithful true and virtuous wife !"

"Once you so permit me, YAMA," so the good Savitri said,
 Once more for my husband's father be my supplication made,

Grant him his kingdom, in the forest dwells the monarch faint and weak,
 Grant him back his wealth and kingdom, YAMA, in thy mercy speak !"

"Loving daughter," YAMA answered, "wealth and kingdom I bestow,
 But, Savitri, living mortal may not with King YAMA go !"

And Savitri, meek and faithful, followed her departed lord,
 YAMA still with higher wisdom listened to her saintly word,

And the Sable King was vanquished, and he turned to her again,
 And his words fell on Savitri like the cooling summer rain,

O noble woman, speak thy wishes, name thy boon and purpose high,
 What the pious mortal asketh gods in heaven may not deny !"

"Thou hast," so Savitri answered, "granted father's realm and might,
 His vain and sightless eyeballs hast restored their wonted light,

Grant him, that the line of monarchs may not all untimely end,
Grant him, to his son and grandsons that his empire may descend !”

“Have thy object,” answered YAMA, “and thy lord shall live again,
He shall live to be a father, and his children too shall reign,

For a woman’s troth abideth longer than the fleeting breath,
And a woman’s love abideth higher than the doom of Death !”

VI

Return Home

Vanished then the Sable Monarch, and Savitri held her way,
Where in dense and darksome forest still her husband lifeless lay,

And she sat upon the greensward by the cold unconscious dead,
On her lap with wifely duty placed her consort’s lifeless head,

And that touch of true affection thrilled him back to waking life,
As returned from distant regions gazed the prince upon his wife,

“Have I lain too long and slumbered, sweet Savitri, faithful spouse,
But I dreamt a Sable Person took me in a fatal noose !”

“Pillowed on this lap,” she answered, “long upon the earth you lay,
And the Sable Person, husband, he hath come and passed away,

Rise and leave this darksome forest if thou feelest light and strong,
For the night is on the jungle and our way is dark and long.”

Rising as from happy slumber looked the young prince all around,
Saw the wide-extending jungle mantling all the darksome ground,

“Yes,” he said, “I now remember, ever true and faithful dame,
We in search of fruit and fuel to this lonesome forest came,

As I hewed the gnarled branches, cruel anguish filled my brain,
And I laid me on the greensward with a throbbing piercing pain,

laid on thy gentle bosom, solaced by thy gentle love,
 as soothed, and drowsy slumber fell on me from skies above.

It was dark and then I witnessed, was it but a fleeting dream,
 or Vision, dark and dreadful, in the deepening shadows gleam,

Is this dream, my fair Savitri, dost thou of this Vision know,
 Tell me, for before my eyesight still the Vision seems to glow !"

"Darkness thickens," said Savitri, "and the evening waxeth late,
 When the morrow's light returneth I shall all these scenes narrate,

How arise, for darkness gathers, deeper grows the gloomy night,
 And thy loving anxious parents trembling wait thy welcome sight,

Mark the rangers of the forest ! how their voices strike the ear,
 Howlers of the darksome jungle ! how they fill my breast with fear !

Forest-fire is raging yonder, for I see a distant gleam,
 And the rising evening breezes help the red and radiant beam,

Let me fetch a burning faggot and prepare a friendly light,
 And these fallen withered branches chase the shadows of the night,

And if feeble still thy footsteps,—long and weary is our way,—
 Let the fire repose, my husband, and return by light of day."

"For my parents, fondly anxious," Satyavan thus made reply,
 Gains my heart and yearns my bosom, let us to their cottage hie,

When I tarried in the jungle or by day or dewy eve,
 Arching in the hermitages often did my parents grieve,

And with father's soft reproaches and with mother's loving fears,
 Did me for my tardy footsteps, dewed me with their gentle tears !

Think then of my father's sorrow, of my mother's woeful plight,
 How far in wood and jungle pass we now the livelong night,

How he beloved, I may not fathom what mishap or load of care,
 How known dangers, unseen sorrows, even now my parents share !"

Gentle drops of filial sorrow trickled down his manly eye,
Fond Savitri sweetly speaking softly wiped the tear-drops dry :

"Trust me, husband, if Savitri hath been faithful in her love,
If she hath with pious offerings served the righteous gods above,

If she hath a sister's kindness unto brother men performed,
If she hath in speech and action unto holy truth conformed,

Unknown blessings, mighty gladness, trust thy ever faithful wife,
And not sorrows or disasters wait this eve our parents' life !"

Then she rose and tied her tresses, gently helped her lord to rise,
Walked with him the pathless jungle, looked with love into his eyes,

On her neck his clasping left arm sweetly winds in soft embrace,
Round his waist Savitri's right arm doth as sweetly interlace,

Thus they walked the darksome jungle, silent stars looked from above,
And the hushed and throbbing midnight watched Savitri's deathless love !

BOOK VI

G O - H A R A N A

(*Cattle-Lifting*)

The conditions of the banishment of the sons of Pandu were hard. They must pass twelve years in exile, and then they must remain a year in concealment. If they were discovered within that last year, they must go into exile for another twelve years.

Having passed the twelve years of exile in forests, the Pandav brothers disguised themselves and entered into the menial service of Virata, king of the Matsyas, to pass the year of concealment. Arjuna presented himself as a Brahman, skilled in dice, and became a courtier of the king. Bhima entered the king's service as a cook. For Arjun, who was so well known, a stricter concealment was necessary. He wore conch bangles and earrings and braided his hair, like those unfortunate beings whom nature has debarred from the privileges of men and women, and he lived in the inner apartments of the king. He assumed the name of *Brihannala*, and taught the amusements of the royal household in music and dancing. Nakula became a keeper of the king's horses, and Sahadeva took charge of the king's cows. Draupadi too disguised herself as a waiting-woman, and attended the princess of the Matsya house in that humble capacity.

In these disguises the Pandav brothers safely passed a year in concealment in spite of all search which Duryodhan made after them. At last an incident happened which led to their discovery at the end of the year was out.

Cattle-lifting was a common practice with the kings of ancient India, as with the chiefs of ancient Greece. The king of the Matsyas and the king of the Kurus combined and fell on the king of the Matsyas in order to drive off the numerous herd of fine

cattle for which his kingdom was famed. The Trigartas entered the Matsya kingdom from the south-east, and while Virata went out with his troops to meet the foe, Duryodhan with his Kuru forces fell the kingdom from the north.

When news came that the Kurus had invaded the kingdom, there was no army in the capital to defend it. King Virata had gone off with most of his troops to face the Trigartas in the south-east, and the prince Uttara had no inclination to face the Kurus in the north. The disguised Arjun now came to the rescue in the manner described in this Book. The description of the bows, arrows, and swords of the Pandav brothers which they had concealed in a tree wrapped like human corpses to frighten away inquisitive travellers throws some light on the arts and manufactures of ancient times. The portions translated in this Book from Sections xxxv., xxxvi., to xliii., a portion of Section xli., and Sections liii. and lxxii. Book iv. of the original text.

I

Complaint of the Cowherd

Monarch of the mighty Matsyas, brave Virata known to fame,
Marched against Trigarta chieftains who from southward regions came

From the north the proud Duryodhan, stealing onwards day by day,
Swooped on Matsya's fattened cattle like the hawk upon its prey !

Bhishma, Drona, peerless Karna, led the Kuru warriors brave,
Swept the kingdom of Virata like the ocean's surging wave,

Fell upon the trembling cowherds, chased them from the pasture-field
Sixty thousand head of cattle was the Matsya country's yield !

And the wailing chief of cowherds fled forlorn fatigued and spent,
Speeding on his rapid chariot to the royal city went,

Came inside the city portals, came within the palace gate,
Struck his forehead in his anguish and bewailed his luckless fate.

ting there the prince Uttara, youth of beauty and of fame,
d him of the Kurus' outrage and lamented Matsya's shame :

ty thousand head of cattle, bred of Matsya's finest breed,
Hastina's distant empire do the Kuru chieftains lead,

ry of the Matsya nation ! save thy father's valued kine,
ck thy footsteps, strong thy valour, vengeance deep and dire be thine !

nst the fierce Trigarta chieftains Matsya's warlike king is gone,
e we count our lord and saviour as our monarch's gallant son,

e, Uttara ! beat the Kurus, homeward lead the stolen kine,
e an elephant of jungle, pierce the Kurus' shattered line !

the *Vina* speaketh music, by musicians tuned aright,
thy sounding bow and arrows speak thy deeds of matchless might,

mess quick thy milk-white coursers to thy sounding battle-car,
st thy golden lion-banner, speed thee, prince, unto the war !

d as thunder-wielding INDRA smote *Asuras* fierce and bold,
te the Kurus with thy arrows winged with plumes of yellow gold,

the famed and warlike Arjun is the stay of Kuru's race,
ou art refuge of the Matsyas and thy kingdom's pride and grace !”

the prince went not to battle from the foe to guard the State,
the cowherd answered gaily, sheltered by the palace gate :

ot unknown to me the usage of the bow and wingéd dart,
unknown the warrior's duty or the warrior's noble art,

ould win my father's cattle from the wily foeman's greed,
skilful chariot-driver could my fiery coursers lead.

my ancient chariot-driver died on battle's gory plain,
ht and twenty days we wrestled, many warlike chiefs were slain,

ng me forth a skilful driver who can urge the battle-steed,
ill hoist my lion-banner, to the dubious battle speed.

Dashing through the foeman's forces on my unresisted car,
I will win the stolen cattle rescued in the field of war,

And like thunder-wielding INDRA, smiting Danu's sons of old,
I will smite the Kuru chieftains, drive them to their distant hold,

Bhishma and the proud Duryodhan, archer Karna known to fame,
Drona too shall quail before me and retreat in bitter shame !

For those warriors in my absence Matsya's far-famed cattle steal,
But beneath my countless arrows Matsya's vengeance they shall feel

Bring me forth a chariot-driver, let me speed my battle-car,
And in wonder they will question—Is this Arjun famed in war ? ”

II

The Disguised Charioteer

Arjun, guised as Brihannala, heard the boast Uttara made,
And to try his skill and valour thus to fair Draupadi prayed :

“Say to him that Brihannala will his battle-chariot lead,
That as Arjun's chariot-driver he hath learned to urge the steed,

Say to him that Brihannala many a dubious war hath seen,
And will win his father's cattle in this contest fierce and keen.”

Fair Draupadi, guised as menial, Arjun's secret hest obeyed,
Humbly stepped before Uttara and in gentle accents prayed :

“Hear me, prince, yon Brihannala will thy battle-chariot lead, ”
He was Arjun's chariot-driver, skilled to urge the flying steed,

Trained to urge resistless coursers, trained to drive the battle-car,
He hath followed helméd Arjun in the glorious field of war,

And when Arjun conquered Khandav, this, Uttara, I have seen,
Brihannala drove his chariot, for I served Yudhishtir's queen.”

Uttara hesitating spake his faint and feeble mind,
 would trust thee, beauteous maiden, lotus-bosomed, ever kind,
 a poor and sexless creature, can he rein the warlike steed,
 n I ask him, worse than woman, in the battle's ranks to lead ? ”
 eed is none,” Draupadi answered, “Brihannala's grace to ask,
 is eager like the war-horse for this great and warlike task,
 d he waits upon thy sister, she will bid the minion speed,
 d he winṣ thy father's cattle and the victor's glorious meed ! ”
 tsya's princess spake to Arjun, Arjun led the battle-car,
 d the doubting prince Uttara to the dread and dubious war.

III

Arms and Weapons

Arjun drove the prince of Matsya to a darksome *sami* tree,
 take unto the timid warrior in his accents bold and free :
 rince, thy bow and shining arrows, pretty handsome toys are these,
 arcely they beseeem a warrior, and a warrior cannot please,
 ou shalt find upon this *sami*, mark my words which never fail,
 ately bows and wingéd arrows, banners swords and coats of mail,
 d the bow which strongest warriors scarce can in the battle bend,
 d the limits of a kingdom widen when that bow is strained,
 ll and slender like a palm-tree, worthy of a warrior bold,
 nooth the wood of hardened fibre, and the ends are yellow gold ! ”
 oubting still Uttara answered : “In this *sami*'s gloomy shade
 rpses hang since many seasons in their wrappings duly laid,
 ow I mark them all suspended, horrent, in the open air,
 nd to touch the unclean objects, friend, is more than I can dare ! ”

"Fear not warrior," Arjun answered, "for the tree conceals no dead,
Warriors' weapons, cased like corpses, lurk within its gloomy shade,

And I ask thee, prince of Matsya, not to touch an unclean thing,
But unto a chief and warrior weapons and his arms to bring."

Prince Uttara gently lighted, climbed the dark and leafy tree,
Arjun from the prince's chariot bade him quick the arms to free,

And the young prince cut the wrappings; lo! the shining bows appear
Twisted, voiced like hissing serpents, like the bright stars glistening clear

Seized with wonder prince Uttara silently the weapons eyed,
And unto his chariot-driver thus in trembling accents cried :

"Whose this bow so tall and stately, speak to me my gentle friend,
On the wood are golden bosses, tipped with gold its either end,

Whose this second ponderous weapon stout and massive in the hold
On the staff are worked by artists elephants of burnished gold,

And what great and mighty monarch owns this other bow of might,
Set with golden glittering insects on its ebon back so bright,

Golden suns of wondrous brightness on this fourth their lustre lend,
Who may be the unknown archer who this stately bow can bend,

And the fifth is set with jewels, gems and stones of purest ray,
Golden fire-flies glint and sparkle in the yellow light of day !

Who doth own these shining arrows with their heads in gold encased,
Thousand arrows bright and feathered in their golden quivers placed,

Next are these with vulture-feather, golden-yellow in their hue,
Made of iron keen and whetted, whose may be these arrows true,

Next upon this sable quiver jungle tigers gleam in gold,
And these keen and boar-eared arrows speak some chieftain fierce and bold

th are these seven hundred arrows, crescent in their shining blade,
sting for the blood of foemen, and by cunning artists made,

the fifth are golden-crested, made of tempered steel and bright,
ot feathers wing these arrows whetted and of wonderous might !

k again this wondrous sabre, shape of toad is on the hilt,
he blade a toad is graven and the scabbard nobly gilt,

er, stouter is this second in its sheath of tiger-skin,
ed with bells and gold-surmounted and the blade is bright and keen,

this scimitar so curious by the skilled *Nishadas* made,
bard made of wondrous cowhides sheathes the bright and polished blade,

th, a long and beauteous weapon glittering sable in its hue,
its sheath of softer goat-skin worked with gold on azure blue,

the fifth is broad and massive over thirty fingers long,
en-sheathed and gold embosséd, like a snake or fiery tongue ! ”

usly responded Arjun : “ Mark this bow embossed with gold,
the wondrous bow, *Gandiva*, worthy of a warrior bold,

of heaven ! to archer Arjun kindly gods this weapons sent,
the confines of a kingdom widen when the bow is bent,

this mighty ponderous weapon worked with elephants of gold,
this oft the stalwart Bhima hath the tide of conquests rolled,

the third with golden insects by a cunning hand inlaid,
Yadhishtir's royal weapon by the noblest artists made,

the bow with solar lustre brave Nakula wields in fight,
the fifth is Sabadeva's, decked with gems and jewels bright !

k again these thousand arrows, unto Arjun they belong,
the darts whose blades are crescent unto Bhima brave and strong,

Boar-ear shafts are young Nakula's, in the tiger-quiver cased,
Sahadeva owns the arrows with the parrot's feather graced,

These three-knotted shining arrows, thick and yellow vulture-plumed
They belong to King Yudhishtir, with their heads by gold illumed

Listen more, if of these sabres, prince of Matsya, thou wouldst know
Arjun's sword is toad-engraven, ever dreaded by the foe,

And the sword in tiger-scabbard, massive and of mighty strength,
None save tiger-waisted Bhima wields that sword of wondrous length

Next the sabre golden-hilted, sable and with gold embossed,
Brave Yudhishtir kept that sabre when the king his kingdom lost,

Yonder sword with goat-skin scabbard brave Nakula wields in war,
In the cowhide Sahadeva keeps his shining scimitar !”

“Strange thy accents,” spake Uttara, “stranger are the weapons bright
Are they arms of sons of Pandu famed on earth for matchless might

Where are now those peerless princes by a dire misfortune crossed,
Warlike Arjun, good Yudhishtir by his subjects loved and lost,

Where is tiger-waisted Bhima, matchless fighter in the field,
And the brave and twin-born brothers skilled the arms of war to wield

O'er a game they lost their empire and we heard of them no more,
Or perchance they lonesome wander in some wild and distant shore

And Draupadi noble princess, purest best of womankind,
Doth she wander with Yudhishtir, changeless in her heart and mind

Proudly answered valiant Arjun, and a smile was on his face,
“Not in distant lands the brothers do their wandering footsteps trace

In thy father's court concealing, lives Yudhishtir just and good,
Bhima in thy father's palace as a cook prepares the food,

ve Nakula guards the horses, Sahadeva tends the kine,
thy sister's waiting-woman doth the fair Draupadi shine,
don, prince, these rings and bangles, pardon strange unmanly guise,
no poor and sexless creature,—Arjun greets thy wondering eyes !”

IV

Rescue of the Cattle

un decked his glorious stature in the gleaming arms of war,
d with voice of distant thunder rolled the mighty battle-car,

the Kurus marked with wonder Arjun's standard lifted proud,
ard with dread the deep *Gandiva* sounding oft and sounding loud,

they knew the wondrous bowman wheeling round the battle-car,
l with doubts and grave misgivings outspake Drona skilled in war :

at is Arjun's monkey-standard, how it greets my ancient eyes,
l the Kurus know the standard like a comet in the skies,

t is Arjun's deep *Gandiva*, how my ear its accents greet,
l the Kurus know these arrows falling prone before my feet,

these darts his salutation to his teacher loved of old,
rs of exile now completed, Arjun sends with greetings bold !

v the gallant prince advances ! Now I mark his form and face,
ing from his dark concealment with a brighter, loftier grace,

l I know his bow and arrows and I know his standard well,
the deep and echoing accents of his far-resounding shell,

his shining arms accoutred, gleaming in his helmet dread,
in shines like flame of *homa* by libations duly fed !”

in marked the Kuru warriors arming for th' impending war,
spered thus to prince Uttara as he drove the battle-car :

"Stop thy steeds, O prince of Matsya ! for too close we may not go,
Stop thy chariot whence my arrows reach and slay the distant foe,

Seek we out the Kuru monarch, proud Duryodhan let us meet,
If he falls we win the battle, other chieftains will retreat.

There is Drona my preceptor, Drona's warlike son is there,
Kripa and the mighty Bhishma, archer Karna tall and fair,

Them I seek not in this battle, lead, O lead thy chariot far,
Midst the chiefs Duryodhan moves not, moves not in the ranks of war

He to save the pilfered cattle marches onward in his fear,
While these warriors stay and tarry to defend their monarch's rear,

But I leave these car-borne warriors, other work to-day is mine,
Meet Duryodhan in the battle, win thy father's stolen kine !"

Matsya's prince then turned the coursers, left behind the war's array,
Followed where the prince Duryodhan with the cattle held his way,

Kripa marked the course of Arjun, guessed his inmost thought aright
And he spake to brother warriors urging speed and instant fight :

"Mark ye, chieftains, gallant Arjun wheels his sounding battle-car,
'Gainst our prince the proud Duryodhan seeks to turn the tide of war

Let us fall upon our foeman and our prince and leader save,
Few save INDRA, god of battles, conquers Arjun fierce and brave,

What were Matsya's fattened cattle, many thousands though they be
If our monarch sinks in battle like a ship in stormy sea !"

Vain were Kripa's words of wisdom, Arjun drove the chariot far,
While his shafts like countless locusts whistled through the ranks of war

Kuru soldiers struck with panic neither stood and fought, nor fled,
Gazed upon the distant foeman gazed upon their comrades dead,

Arjun twanged his mighty weapon, blew his far-resounding shell,
Strangely spake his monkey-standard, Kuru warriors knew it well !

kha's voice, *Gandiva's* accents, and the chariot's booming sound,
 ed the air like distant thunder, shook the firm and solid ground,
 u soldiers fled in terror or they slumbered with the dead,
 the rescued lowing cattle with their tails uplifted fled !

V

Warrior's Guerdon

W with joy the king Virata to his royal city came,
 the rescued herds of cattle, saw Uttara prince of fame,
 rked the great and gallant Arjun, helmet-wearing, armour-cased,
 ew Yudhishtir and his brothers now as royal princes dressed,
 d he greeted good Yudhishtir, truth-beloving brave and strong,
 to valiant Arjun offered Matsya's princess fair and young !
 rdon, monarch," answered Arjun, "but I may not take as bride,
 sya's young and beauteous princess whom I love with father's pride,
 hath often met me trusting in the inner palace hall,
 a daughter on a father waited on my loving call !
 ave trained her *lokil* accents, taught her maiden steps in dance,
 ched her skill and varied graces all her native charms enhance,
 e is she in thought and action, spotless as my hero boy,
 nt her to my son, O monarch, as his wedded wife and joy !
 imanyu trained in battle is a youth of godlike face,
 shua's sister, fair Subhadra, bore that child of princely grace,
 thy of thy peerless daughter, pure in heart and undefiled,
 nt it, sire, my Abhimanyu wed thy young and beauteous child !'

Answered Matsya's noble monarch with a glad and grateful heart :
 "Words like these befit thy virtue, nobly hast thou done thy part,

Be it as thou sayest, Arjun, unto Pandu's race allied,
 Matsya's royal line is honoured, Matsya's king is gratified !"

VI

The Wedding

Good Yudhishtir heard the tidings and he gave his free assent,
 Unto distant chiefs and monarchs kindly invitations sent,

In the town of Upa-plavya, of fair Matsya's towns the best,
 Made their home the pious brothers to receive each royal guest.

Came unto them Kasi's monarch and his armed troopers came,
 And the king of fair Panchala with his sons of warlike fame,

Came the sons of fair Draupadi early trained in art of war,
 Other chiefs and sacrificers came from regions near and far,

Krishna decked in floral garlands with his elder brother came,
 And his sister fair Subhadra, Arjun's loved and longing dame,

Arjun's son brave Abhimanyu came upon his flowery car,
 With his elephants and chargers, troopers trained in art of war.

Vrishnis from the sea-girt Dwarka, brave Andhakas known to fame,
 Bhojas from the mighty Chumbal with the righteous Krishna came,

He to gallant sons of Pandu made his presents rich and rare,
 Gems and gold and costly garments, slaves and damsels passing fair !

With its quaint and festive greetings came at last the bridal day,
 Matsya maids were merry-hearted, Pandu's sons were bright and gay,

Conch and cymbal, horn and trumpet, spake forth music soft and sweet
 In Virata's royal palace, in the peopled mart and street !

they slay the jungle red-deer, and they spread the ample board,
prepare the cooling palm-drink with the richest vains stored,

es and actors please the people, bards recite the ancient song,
ies of heroic houses minstrels by their lays prolong !

deep-bosomed dames of Matsya, jasmine-form and lotus-face,
n their pearls and golden garlands joyously the bridal grace,

led by these royal ladies, though they all are bright and fair,
htest shines the fair Draupadi with a beauty rich and rare,

ely dames and merry maidens lead the young and soft-eyed bride,
he queens of gods encircle INDRA'S daughter in her pride !

in from the Matsya monarch takes the princess passing fair,
his son by fair Subhadra, nursed by Krishna's loving care,

o a godlike grace Yudhishtir stands by faithful Arjun's side,
father takes a daughter, takes the young and beauteous bride,

s her hands to Abhimanyu's and with cake and parchéd rice,
the altar brightly blazing doth the holy sacrifice.

sya's monarch on the bridegroom rich and costly presents pressed,
phants he gave two hundred, steeds seven thousand of the best,

red libations on the altar, on the priests bestowed his gold,
red to the sons of Pandu rich domain and wealth untold.

n a pious hand Yudhishtir, true in heart and pure in mind,
he his gifts in gold and garments, kine and wealth of every kind,

ly Chariots, beds of splendour, robes with thread of gold belaced,
ods rich and sweet confection, drinks the richest and the best,

ds he gave unto the Brahman, bullocks to the labouring swain,
ds he gave unto the warrior, to the people gifts and grain,

the city of the Matsyas, teeming with a wealth untold,
re with festive joy and gladness and with flags of cloth of gold !

BOOK VII

UDYOGA

(The Council of War)

THE term of banishment having expired, Yudhishtir demanded that the kingdom of Indra-prastha should be restored to him. The old Dhritarashtra and his queen and his aged and virtuous councillors advised the restoration, but the jealous Duryodhan hated his cousins with a genuine hatred, and would not consent. All negotiations were therefore futile, and preparations were made on both sides for the most sanguinary and disastrous battle that was ever witnessed in Northern India.

The portions translated in this Book are from Sections i., iii., xciv., cxxiv., and cxxvi. of Book v. of the original text.

I

Krishna's Speech

Mirth and song and nuptial music waked the echoes of the night,
Youthful bosoms throbbed with pleasure, love-lit glances sparkled bright.

But when young and white-robed USHAS opened the golden gates of day,
To Virata's council chamber chieftains thoughtful held their way.

Stones inlaid in arch and pillar glinted in the glittering dawn,
Gay festoons and graceful garlands o'er the golden cushions shone,

Matsya's king, Panchala's monarch, did the foremost honour claim,
Krishna too and Valadeva, Dwarka's chiefs of righteous fame,

them sate the bold Satyaki from the sea-girt western shore,
the godlike sons of Pandu,—days of dark concealment o'er.

athful princes in their splendour graced Virata's royal hall,
ant sons of valiant fathers, brave in war, august and tall,

their gem-bespangled garments came the warriors proud and high,
the council chamber glittered like the star-bespangled sky !

nd the greetings, sweet the converse, softly did the moments fly,
intent on graver questions all on Krishna turned their eye,

shna with his inner vision then the state of things surveyed,
d his thoughts before the monarchs thus in weighty accents laid :

nown to all, ye mighty monarchs, may your glory ever last,
e to plighted word Yudhishtir hath his weary exile passed,

elve long years with fair Draupadi in the pathless jungle strayed,
d a year in menial service in Virata's palace stayed,

hath kept his plighted promise, braved affliction woe and shame,
d he begs, assembled monarchs, ye shall now his duty name.

he swerveth not from duty kingdom of the sky to win,
zeth hamlet more than empire, so his course be free from sin,

ss of realm and wealth and glory higher virtues in him prove,
oughts of peace and not of anger still his heart and purpose move !

rk again the sleepless anger and the unrelenting hate
rboured by the proud Duryodhan driven by his luckless fate,

om a child, by fire or poison, impious guile or trick of dice,
hath compassed dark destruction by deceit and low device !

nder well, ye gracious monarch, with a just and righteous mind,
lp Yudhishtir with your counsel, with your grace and blessings kind,

ould the noble son of Pandu seek his right by open war,
ek the aid of righteous monarchs and of chieftains near and far ?

Should he smite his ancient foemen skilled in each deceitful art,
Unforgiving in their vengeance, unrelenting in their heart ?

Should he rather send a message to the proud unbending foe,
And Duryodhan's haughty purpose seek by messenger to know ?

Should he send a noble envoy, trained in virtue, true and wise,
With his greetings to Duryodhan in a meek and friendly guise ?

Ask him to restore the kingdom on the sacred Jumna's shore,
Either king may rule his empire as in happy days of yore ? ”

Krishna uttered words of wisdom pregnant with his peaceful thought
For in peace and not by bloodshed still Yudhishtir's right he sought

II

Valadeva's Speech

Krishna's elder Valadeva, stalwart chief who bore the plough,
Rose and spake, the blood of Vrishnis mantled o'er his lofty brow :

“Ye have listened, pious monarchs, to my brother's gentle word,
Love he bears to good Yudhishtir and to proud Hastina's lord,

For his realm by dark blue Jumna good Yudhishtir held of yore,
Brave Duryodhan ruled his kingdom on the ruddy Ganga's shore,

And once more in love and friendship either prince may rule his share,
For the lands are broad and fertile, and each realm is rich and fair !

Speed the envoy to Hastina with our love and greetings kind,
Let him speak Yudhishtir's wishes, seek to know Duryodhan's mind,

Make obeisance unto Bhishma and to Drona true and bold,
Unto Kripa, archer Karna, and to chieftains young and old,

the sons of Dhrita-rashtra, rulers of the Kuru land
 righteous in their kingly duties, stout of heart and strong of hand,
 the princes and to burghers gathered in the council hall,
 him speak Yudhishtir's wishes, plead Yudhishtir's cause to all.
 ask he not in futile anger, for Duryodhan holds the power,
 and Yudhishtir's wrath were folly in this sad and luckless hour,
 his dearest friends dissuaded, but by rage or madness driven,
 hath played and lost his empire, may his folly be forgiven !
 Dra-prastha's spacious empire now Duryodhan deems his own,
 his tears and soft entreaty let Yudhishtir seek the throne,
 in war I do not counsel, humbly seek Duryodhan's grace,
 nor will not restore the empire nor the gambler's loss replace !"
 as with cold and cruel candour stalwart Valadeva cried,
 faithful rose the brave Satyaki, fiercely thus to him replied.

III

Satyaki's Speech

came unto the halting chieftain who thus pleads Duryodhan's part,
 did counsel, Valadeva, speaks a woman's timid heart,
 from warlike stock ariseth weakling chief who bends the knee,
 and withered fruitless sapling springeth from a fruitful tree !
 on a heart so faint and craven, faint and craven words must flow,
 marches in their pride and glory list not to such counsel low,
 midst thou, impious Valadeva, midst these potentates of fame,
 Yudhishtir pious-hearted cast this undeserved blame ?
 blighted by his wily foeman and by dark misfortune crost,
 clinging to their faith Yudhishtir played a righteous game and lost,

Challenge from a crownéd monarch can a crownéd king decline,
Can a prince and warrior fathom fraud in sons of royal line ?

Nathless he surrendered empire true to faith and plighted word,
Lived for years in pathless forests Indra-prastha's peerless lord,

Past his years of weary exile, now he claims his realm of old,
Claims it, not as humble suppliant, but as king and warrior bold,

Past his year of dark concealment, bold Yudhishtir claims his own,
Proud Duryodhan now must render Indra-prastha's jewelled throne !

Bhishma counsels, Drona urges, Kripa pleads for right in vain,
False Duryodhan will not render sinful conquest, fraudulent gain,

Open war I therefore counsel, ruthless and relentless war,
Grace we seek not when we meet them speeding on our battle-car !

And our weapons, not entreaties, shall our foemen force to yield,
Yield Yudhishtir's rightful kingdom or they perish on the field,

False Duryodhan and his forces fall beneath our battle's shock,
As beneath the bolt of thunder falls the crushed and riven rock !

Who shall meet the helméd Arjun in the gory field of war,
Krishna with his fiery discus mounted on his battle-car,

Who shall face the twin-born brothers by the mighty Bhima led,
And the vengeful chief Satyaki with his bow and arrows dread ?

Ancient Drupad wields his weapon peerless in the field of fight,
And his brave son, born of AGNI, owns an all-consuming might,

Abhimanyu, son of Arjun, whom the fair Subhadra bore,
And whose happy nuptials brought us from far Dwarka's sea-girt shore,

Men on earth nor bright Immortals can the youthful hero face,
When with more than Arjun's prowess Abhimanyu leads the race !

Dhrita-rashtra's sons we conquer and Gandhara's wily son,
 conquer Karna though world-honoured for his deeds of valour done,

Win the fierce-contested battle and redeem Yudhishtir's own,
 place the long-enduring exile on his father's ancient throne !

And no sin Satyaki reckons slaughter of the mortal foe,
 but to beg a grace of foemen were a mortal sin and woe,

Speed we then unto our duty, let our impious foemen yield,
 for the fiery son of Sini meets them on the battle field !”

IV

Drupad's Speech

Fair Panchala's ancient monarch rose his secret thoughts to tell,
 From his lips the words of wisdom with a graceful accent fell :

“Much I fear thou speakest truly, hard is Kuru's stubborn race,
 Vain the hope, the effort futile, to beseech Duryodhan's grace !

Dhrita-rashtra pleadeth vainly, feeble is his fitful star,
 Ancient Bhishma, righteous Drona, cannot stop this fatal war,

Archer Karna thirsts for battle, moved by jealousy and pride,
 Deep Sakuni, false and wily, still supports Duryodhan's side !

Vain is Valadeva's counsel, vainly shall our envoy plead,
 Half his empire proud Duryodhan yields not in his boundless greed,

In his pride he deems our mildness faint and feeble-hearted fear,
 And our suit will fan his glory and his arrogance will cheer !

Therefore let our many heralds travel near and travel far,
 Seek alliance of all monarchs in the great impending war,

Unto brave and noble chieftains, unto nations east and west,
 North and south to warlike races speed our message and request !

Meanwhile peace and offered friendship we before Duryodhan place,
And my priest will seek Hastina, strive to win Duryodhan's grace,

If he renders Indra-prastha, peace will crown the happy land,
Or our troops will shake the empire from the east to western strand !"

Vainly were Panchala's Brahmans sent with messages of peace,
Vainly urged the Kuru elders that the fatal feud should cease,

Proud Duryodhan to his kinsmen would not yield their proper share,
Pandu's sons would not surrender, for they had the will to dare

Fatal war and dire destruction did the mighty gods ordain,
Till the kings and armed nations strewed the red and reeking plain,

Krishna in his righteous effort sought for wisdom from above,
Strove to stop the war of nations and to end the feud in love,

And to far Hastina's palace humbly went to sue for peace,
Raised his voice against the warfare, begged the fatal feud should cease.

V

Krishna's Speech at Hastina

Silent sat the listening chieftains in Hastina's council hall,
With the voice of rolling thunder Krishna spake unto them all :

"Listen, mighty Dhrita-rashtra, Kuru's great and ancient king,
Seek not war and death of kinsmen, word of peace and love I bring,

'Midst the wide earth's many nations Bharats in their worth excel,
Love and truth and spotless virtue in the Kuru-elders dwell,

Father of that noble nation, now retired from life's turmoil,
Ill beseems that sin or untruth should thy ancient bosom soil !

For thy sons in impious anger seek to do their kinsmen wrong,
And withhold the throne and kingdom which by right to them belong, .

And a danger thus ariseth like the comet's baleful fire,
Slaughtered kinsmen, bleeding nations, soon shall feed its fatal ire!

Stretch thy hands, O Kuru monarch, prove a father's loving grace,
Man of peace, avert the slaughter and preserve thy ancient race,

Yet restrain thy fiery children, for thy mandates they obey,
I with sweet and soft persuasion Pandu's truthful sons will sway !

'Tis thy profit, Kuru monarch, that the fatal feud should cease,
Brave Duryodhan, good Yudhishtir, rule in unmolested peace,

Pandu's sons are strong in valour, mighty is their armed hand,
INDRA shall not shake thy empire when they guard the Kuru land !

Bhishma is thy kingdom's bulwark, doughty Drona rules the war,
Karna matchless with his arrows, Kripa peerless in his car,

Let Yudhishtir and stout Bhima by these noble warriors stand,
And let helmet-wearing Arjun guard the sacred Kuru land,

Who shall then contest thy prowess from the sea to farthest sea,
Ruler of a world-wide empire, king of kings and nations free ?

Sons and grandsons, friends and kinsmen, will surround thee in a ring,
And a race of loving heroes guard their ancient hero-king,

Dhrita-rashtra's lofty edicts will proclaim his boundless sway,
Nations work his righteous mandates and the kings his will obey !

If this concord be rejected and the lust of war prevail,
Soon within these ancient chambers will resound the voice of wail,

Grant thy children be victorious and the sons of Pandu slain,
Dear to thee are Pandu's children, and their death must cause thee pain,

But the Pandavs skilled in warfare are renowned both near and far,
And thy race and children's slaughter will methinks pollute this war,

Sons and grandsons, loving princes, thou shalt never see again,
Kinsmen true and faithful clansmen will bedeck the gory plain !

Ponder yet, O ancient monarch, rulers of each distant State,
Nations from the farthest regions gather thick to court their fate,

Father of a righteous nation, save the princes of the land,
On the armed and fated nations stretch, old man, thy saving hand !

Say the word, and at thy bidding leaders of each hostile race
Not the gory field of battle but the festive board will grace,

Robed in jewels, decked in garlands, they will quaff the ruddy wine,
Greet their foes in mutual kindness, bless thy holy name and thine !

Think, O man of many seasons, when good Pandu left his throne,
And his helpless loving orphans thou didst cherish as thine own,

'Twas thy helping steadying fingers taught their infant steps to frame,
'Twas thy loving gentle accents taught their lips to lisp each name,

As thine own they grew and blossomed, dear to thee they yet remain,
Take them back unto thy bosom, be a father once again !

Unto thee, O Dhṛita-rashtra, Pandu's sons in homage bend,
And a loving peaceful message through my willing lips they send :

Tell our monarch, more than father, by his sacred stern command
We have lived in pathless jungle, wandered far from land to land,

True unto our plighted promise, for we ever felt and knew,
To his promise Dhṛita-rashtra cannot, will not be untrue !

Years of anxious toil are over and of woe and bitterness,
Years of waiting and of watching and of danger and distress,

Like a dark unending midnight hung on us this age forlorn,
Streaks of hope and dawning brightness usher now the radiant morn !

Be unto us as a father, loving, not inspired by wrath,
Be unto us as a teacher, pointing us the righteous path,

If perchance astray we wander, may thy strong arm lead aright,
If our feeble bosom fainteth, help us with a father's might !

This, O king, the soft entreaty Pandu's sons to thee have made,
These are words the sons of Pandu unto Kuru's king have said,

Take their love, O gracious monarch, let thy closing days be fair,
Let Duryodhan keep his kingdom, let the Pandavs have their share !

Call to mind their noble suffering, for the tale is dark and long,
Of the outrage they have suffered, of the insult and the wrong,

Exiled into Varnavata, destined unto death by flame,
For the gods assist the righteous, they with added prowess came,

Exiled into Indra-prastha, they with righteous toil and might
Cleared a forest, built a city, did the *rajasuya* rite,

Cheated of their realm and empire and of all they called their own,
In the jungle long they wandered and in Matsya lived unknown,

Once more quelling every evil they are stout of heart and hand,
Now redeem thy plighted promise and restore their throne and land !

*Trust me, mighty Dhrita-rashtra, trust me, lords who grace this hall,
Krishna pleads for peace and virtue, blessings unto you and all,*

*Slaughter not the armed nations, slaughter not thy kith and kin,
Mark not, king, thy closing winters with the bloody stain of sin,*

*Let thy sons and Pandu's children stand beside thy ancient throne,
Cherish peace and cherish virtue, for thy days are almost done !"*

VI

Bhishma's Speech

From the monarch's ancient bosom sighs and sobs convulsive broke,
Bhishma wiped his manly eyelids and to proud Duryodhan spoke :

"Listen, prince, for righteous Krishna counsels love and holy peace,
Listen, youth, and may thy fortune with thy passing years increase.

Yield to Krishna's words of wisdom, for thy weal he nobly strives,
Yield and save thy friends and kinsmen, save thy cherished subjects' lives,

Foremost race in all this wide earth is Hastina's royal line,
Bring not on them dire destruction by a sinful act of thine.

Sons and fathers, friends and brothers, shall in mutual conflict die,
Kinsmen slain by dearest kinsmen shall upon the red field lie,

Hearken unto Krishna's counsel, unto wise Vidura's word,
Be thy mother's fond entreaty and thy father's mandate heard !

Tempt not wrath and fiery vengeance on thy old heroic race,
Tread not in the path of darkness, seek the path of light and grace,

Listen to thy king and father, he hath Kuru's empire graced,
Listen to thy queen and mother, she hath nursed thee on her breast !"

VII

Drona's Speech

Out spake Drona priest and warrior, and his words were few and high,
Clouded was Duryodhan's forehead, wrathful was Duryodhan's eye :

"Thou hast heard the holy counsel which the righteous Krishna said,
Ancient Bhishma's voice of warning thou hast in thy bosom weighed,

Peerless in their godlike wisdom are these chiefs in peace or strife,
Truest friends to thee, Duryodhan, pure and sinless in their life.

Take their counsel, and thy kinsmen fasten in the bonds of peace,
May the empire of the Kurus and their warlike fame increase,

List unto thy old preceptor ; faithless is thy fitful star,
And they feed thy passions falsely, those who urge and counsel war.

Crownéd kings and arméd nations shall contest for thee in vain,
Vain for thee, thy friends and kinsmen shall their dearest life-blood drain,

For the victor's crown and glory never, never can be thine,
Krishna conquers, and brave Arjun ! mark these deathless words of mine !

Have trained the youthful Arjun, seen him bend the warlike bow,
Marked him charge the hostile forces, marked him smite the scattered foe,

Fiery son of Jamadagni owned no loftier warrior-might,
Breathes on earth no mortal chieftain conquers Arjun in the fight !

Krishna too, in war resistless, comes from Dwarka's distant shore,
And the bright-gods quake before him whom the fair Devaki bore,

These are foes thou may'st not conquer, take an ancient warrior's word,
Act then as thy heart decideth, thou art Kuru's king and lord !”

VIII

Vidura's Speech

Then in gentler voice Vidura sought his pensive mind to tell,
From his lips serene and softly words of woe and anguish fell :

“Not for thee I grieve, Duryodhan, slain by foemen fierce and keen,
For thy father weeps my bosom and the aged Kuru queen,

Sons and grandsons, friends, and kinsmen, slaughtered in this fatal war,
Homeless, cheerless, on this wide earth they shall wander long and far,

Friendless, kinless, on this wide earth whither shall they turn and fly,
Like some birds bereft of plumage, lonesome pine awhile and die,

Of their race the sad survivors they shall wander o'er the earth,
Curse the fatal day, Duryodhan, saw thy sad and woeful birth !”

IX

Dhrita-rashtra's Speech

Tear-drops filled his sightless eyeballs, anguish shook his aged frame,
As the monarch soothed Duryodhan by each fond endearing name :

"Listen, dearest son, Duryodhan, shun this dark and fatal strife,
Cast not grief and death's black shadow on thy parents' closing life,

Krishna's heart is pure and spotless, true and wise the words he said,
We may win a world-wide empire with the noble Krishna's aid,

Seek the friendship of Yudhishtir loved of righteous gods above,
And unite the scattered Kurus by the lasting tie of love !

Now at full is tide of fortune, never may it come again,
Strive and win, or ever after all repentance may be vain,

Peace is righteous Krishna's counsel and he comes to offer peace,
'Take the offered boon, Duryodhan ! Let all strife and hatred cease !"

X

Duryodhan's Speech

Silent sat the proud Duryodhan wrathful in the council hall,
Spake to mighty-armed Krishna and to Kuru warriors all :

"Ill becomes thee, Dwarka's chieftain, in the paths of sin to move,
Bear for me a secret hatred, for the Pandavs secret love,

And my father, wise Vidura, ancient Bhishma, Drona bold,
Join thee in this bitter hatred, turn on me their glances cold !

What great crime or darkening sorrow shadows o'er my bitter fate,
That ye chiefs and Kuru's monarch mark Duryodhan for your hate,

Speak, what nameless guilt or folly, secret sin to me unknown,
Turns from me your sweet affection, father's love that was my own ?

If Yudhishtir, fond of gambling, played a heedless reckless game,
Lost his empire and his freedom, was it then Duryodhan's blame,

And if freed from shame and bondage in his folly played again,
Lost again and went to exile, wherefore doth he now complain ?

Weak are they in friends and forces, feeble is their fitful star,
Wherefore then in pride and folly seek with us unequal war,

Shall we, who to mighty INDRA scarce will do the homage due,
Bow to homeless sons of Pandu and their comrades faint and few,

Bow to them while warlike Drona leads us as in days of old,
Bhishma greater than the bright-gods, archer Karna true and bold?

If in dubious game, of battle we should forfeit fame and life,
Heaven will ope its golden portals for the warrior slain in strife,

If unbending to our foemen we should press the gory plain,
Stingless is the bed of arrows, death for us will have no pain !

For the Kshatra knows no terror of his foeman in the field,
Breaks like hardened forest timber, bends not, knows not how to yield,

So the ancient sage Matanga of the warlike Kshatra said,
Save to priest and sage preceptor unto none he bends his head !

Indra-prastha which my father weakly to Yudhishtir gave,
Nevermore shall go unto him while I live and brothers brave,

Kuru's undivided kingdom Dhrita-rashtra rules alone,
Let us sheathe our swords in friendship and the monarch's empire own,

If in past in thoughtless folly once the realm was broke in twain,
Kuru-land is re-united, never shall be split again !

*Take my message to my kinsmen, for Duryodhan's words are plain,
Portion of the Kuru empire sons of Pandu seek in vain,*

*Town nor village, mart nor hamlet, help us righteous gods in heaven,
Spot that needle's point can cover shall not unto them be given ! "*

BOOK VIII

BHISHMA-BADHA

(*Fall of Bhishma*)

ALL negotiations for a peaceful partition of the Kuru kingdom having failed, both parties now prepared for a battle, perhaps the most sanguinary that was fought on the plains of India in the ancient times. It was a battle of nations, for all the warlike races in Northern India took a share in it.

Duryodhan's army consisted of his own division, as well as the divisions of ten allied kings. Each allied power is said to have brought one *akshauhini* troops, and if we reduce this fabulous number to the moderate figure of ten thousand, including horse and foot, cars and elephants, Duryodhan's army including his own division was over hundred thousand strong.

Yudhishtir had a smaller army, said to have been seven *akshauhinis* in number, which we may, by a similar reduction, reckon to be seventy thousand. His father-in-law the king of the Panchalas, and Arjun's relative the king of the Matsyas, were his principal allies. Krishna joined him as his friend and adviser, and as the charioteer of Arjun, but the Vrishnis as a nation had joined Duryodhan.

When the two armies were drawn up in array and faced each other, and Arjun saw his revered elders and dear friends and relations among his foes, he was unwilling to fight. It was on this occasion that Krishna explained to him the great principles of Duty in that memorable work called the *Bhagavat-gita* which has been translated into so many European languages. Belief in one Supreme Deity is the underlying thought of this work, and ever and anon, as Professor Garbe remarks, "does Krishna revert to the doctrine

that for every man, no matter to what caste he may belong, the zealous performance of his duty and the discharge of his obligations is his most important work."

Duryodhan chose the grand old fighter Bhishma as the commander-in-chief of his army, and for ten days Bhishma held his own and inflicted serious loss on Yudhishtir's army. The principal incidents of these ten days, ending with the fall of Bhishma, are narrated in this Book.

This Book is an abridgment of Book vi. of the original text.

I

Pandavs routed by Bhishma

Ushas with her crimson fingers oped the portals of the day,
Nations armed for mortal combat in the field of battle lay,

Beat of drum and blare of trumpet and the *sankha's* lofty sound,
By the answering cloud repeated, shook the hills and tented ground,

And the voice of sounding weapons which the warlike archers drew,
And the neigh of battle chargers as the armed horsemen flew,

Mingled with the rolling thunder of each swiftly-speeding car,
And with pealing bells proclaiming mighty elephants of war!

Bhishma led the Kuru forces, strong as Death's resistless flail,
Human chiefs nor bright Immortals could against his might prevail,

Helmet-wearing gallant Arjun came in pride and mighty wrath,
Held aloft his famed *Gandiva*, strove to cross the chieftain's path!

Abhimanyu, son of Arjun, whom the fair Subhadra bore,
Drove against Kosala's monarch famed in arms and holy lore,

Wrote Kosala's lofty standard and the dubious combat won,
Barely with his life the monarch fled from fiery Arjun's son!

With his fated foe Duryodhan, Bhima strove in deathful war,
And against the proud Duhsasan brave Nakula drove his car,

Sahadeva, mighty bowman, then the fierce Durmukha sought,
And the righteous king Yudhishtir with the car-borne Salya fought,

Ancient feud and deathless hatred fired the Brahman warrior bold,
Drona with the proud Panchalas fought once more his feud of old !

Nations from the Eastern regions 'gainst the bold Virata pressed,
Kripa met the wild Kaikeyas hailing from the furthest West,

Drupad proud and peerless monarch with his cohorts onward bore
'Gainst the warlike Jayadratha chief of Sindhu's sounding shore,

Chedis and the valiant Matsyas, nations gathered from afar,
Bhojas and the fierce Kambojas mingled in the dubious war !

Through the day the battle lasted, and no mortal tongue can tell
What unnumbered chieftains perished and what countless soldiers fell,

And the son knew not his father, and the sire knew not his son,
Brother fought against his brother, kith and kinsmen lost and won,

Horses fell, and shafts of chariots shivered in resistless shock,
Hurled against the foeman's chariot speeding like the rolling rock,

Elephants by *mahuts* guided furiously each other tore,
Trumpeting with trunks uplifted on the serried soldiers bore,

Ceaseless plied the gallant troopers, with a stern unyielding might,
Pikes and axes, clubs and maces, swords and spears and lances bright,

Horsemen flew as forkéd lightning, heroes faught in shining mail,
Archers poured their feathered arrows like the bright and glistening hail !

Bhishma leader of the Kurus, as declined the dreadful day,
Through the shattered Pandav legions forced his all-resistless way,

Onward went his palm-tree standard through the hostile ranks of war,
Matsyas, Kasis, nor Panchalas faced the death-compelling car !

But the fiery son of Arjun, filled with shame and bitter wrath,
Turned his chariot and his coursers to obstruct the chieftain's path,

Vainly fought the youthful warrior though his darts were pointed well,
And dissevered from his chariot Bhishma's palm-tree standard fell,

Anger stirred the ancient Bhishma and he rose in all his might,
Abhimanyu pierced with arrows fell and fainted in the fight !

Then to save the son of Arjun, Matsya's gallant princes came,
Brave Utara, noble Sweta, youthful warriors known to fame,

Ah ! too early fell the warriors in that sad and fatal strife,
Matsya's dames and dark-eyed maidens wept the princes' shortened life !

Slain by cruel fate untimely fell two brothers young and good,
Dauntless still the youngest brother, proud and gallant Sankha stood,

But the helmet-wearing Arjun came to stop the victor's path,
And to save the fearless Sankha from the ancient Bhishma's wrath,

Drupad too, Panchala's monarch, swiftly rushed into the fray,
Strove to shield the broken Pandavs and to stop the victor's way,

But as fire consumes the forest, wrathful Bhishma slew the foe,
None could face his sounding chariot and his ever-circled bow,

And the fainting Pandav warriors marked the foeman fierce and bold,
Shook like unprotected cattle tethered in the blighting cold !

Onward came the mighty Bhishma and the slaughter fiercer grew,
From his bow like hissing serpents still the glistening arrows flew,

Onward came the ancient warrior and his path was strewn with dead,
And the broken Pandav forces, crushed and driven, scattered fled,

Friendly night and gathering darkness closed the slaughter of the day,
To their tents the sons of Pandu held their sad and weary way !

II

Kurus routed by Arjun

Grieved at heart the good Yudhishtir wept the losses of the day,
Sought the aid of gallant Krishna for the morning's fresh array,

And when from the eastern mountains SURYA drove his fiery car,
Krishna and the helméd Arjun strove to turn the tide of war,

Bhishma's glorious palm-tree standard o'er the field of battle rose,
Arjun's monkey standard glittered cleaving through the serried foes,

Devas from their cloud-borne chariots, and *Gandharvas* from the sky,
Gazed in mute and speechless wonder on the human chiefs from high !

While with dauntless valour Arjun still the mighty Bhishma sought,
Warlike prince of fair Panchala with the doughty Drona fought,

Ceaseless 'gainst the proud preceptor sent his darts like summer rain,
Baffled by the skill of Drona, Dhrista-dyumna strove in vain,

But the fiercer darts of Drona pierced the prince's shattered mail,
Hurling on this battle chariot like an angry shower of hail,

And they rent in twain his bowstring and they cut his pond'rous mace,
Slew his steeds and chariot-driver, streaked with blood his godlike face.

Dauntless still Panchala's hero, springing from his shattered car,
Like a hungry desert lion with his sabre rushed to war,

Dashed aside the darts of Drona with his broad and ample shield,
With his sabre brightly flaming fearless trod the reddened field !

In his fury and his rashness he had fallen on that day,
But the ever-watchful Bhima stopped the proud preceptor's way,

Proud Duryodhan marked with anger Bhima rushing in his car,
And he sent Kalinga's forces to the thickening ranks of war.

Onward came Kalinga's forces with the dark tornado's might,
Dusky chiefs, Nishada warriors, gloomy as the sable night,

Rose the shout of warring nations surging to the battle's fore,
Like the angry voice of tempest and the ocean's troubled roar,

And like darkly rolling breakers ranks of serried warriors flew,
Scarcely in the thickening darkness friends and kin from foemen knew.

Fell the young prince of Kalinga by the wrathful Bhima slain,
But against Kalinga's monarch baffled Bhima fought in vain,

Safely sat the eastern monarch on his *howda's* lofty seat,
Till upon the giant tusker Bhima sprang with agile feet,

Then he struck with fatal fury, brave Kalinga fell in twain,
Scattered fled his countless forces when they saw their leader slain !

Darkly rolled the tide of battle where Duryodhan's valiant son
Strove against the son of Arjun famed for deeds of valour done,

Proud Duryodhan marked the contest with a father's anxious heart,
Came to save his gallant Lakshman from brave Abhimanyu's dart,

And the helmet-wearing Arjun marked his son among his foes,
Wheeled from far his battle-chariot and in wrath terrific rose.

"Arjun !" "Arjun !" cried the Kurus, and in panic broke and fled,
Steed and tusker turned from battle, soldiers fell among the dead,

Godlike Krishna drove the coursers of resistless Arjun's car,
And the sound of Arjun's *shankha* rose above the cry of war,

And the voice of his *Gandwa* spread a terror far and near,
Crushed and broken, faint and frightened, fled the Kurus in their fear,

Onward still through scattered foemen conquering Arjun held his way,
Till the evening's gathering darkness closed the action of the day !

III

Bhishma and Arjun meet

Anxious was the proud Duryodhan when the golden morning came,
For before the car of Arjun fled each Kuru chief of fame,

Brave Duryodhan shook in anger and a tremor moved his frame,
As he spake to ancient Bhishma words of wrath in bitter shame :

"Bhishma, dost thou lead the Kurus in this battle's crimson field,
Warlike Drona, doth he guard us like a broad and ample shield,

Wherefore then before yon Arjun do the valiant Kurus fly,
Wherefore doth our leader linger when he hears the battle cry ?

Doth a secret love for Pandavs quell our leader's matchless might,
With a halting zeal for Kurus doth the noble Bhishma fight,—

Pardon, chief, if for the Pandavs doth thy partial heart incline,
Yield thy place, let faithful Karna lead my gallant Kuru line !"

Anger flamed on Bhishma's forehead and the tear was in his eye,
And in accents few and trembling thus the warrior made reply :

"Vain our toil, unwise Duryodhan ! Nor can Bhishma warrior old,
Nor can Drona skilled in weapons, Karna archer proud and bold,

Wash the stain of deeds unholy and of wrongs and outraged laws,
Conquer with a load of cunning 'gainst a right and righteous cause,

Deaf to wisdom's voice, Duryodhan, deaf to parents and to kin,
Thou shalt perish in thy folly, in thy unrepented sin !

For the wrongs and insults offered unto good Yudhishtir's wife,
For the kingdom from him stolen, for the plots against his life,

For the dreadful oath of Bhima, for the holy counsel given,
Vainiy given by saintly Krishna, thou art doomed by righteous Heaven,

Meanwhile since he leads thy forces, Bhishma still shall meet his foe,
Or to conquer or to perish to the battle's front I go !”

Speaking thus, unto the battle ancient Bhishma held his way,
Sweeping all before his chariot as he swept them day by day,

And the army of Yudhishtir shook from end to farthest end,
Arjun nor the valiant Krishna could against the tide contend,

Cars were shattered, fled the coursers, elephants were pierced and slain,
Shafts of chariots, broken standards, lifeless soldiers strewed the plain,

Coats of mail were left by warriors as they ran with streaming hair,
Soldiers fled like herds of cattle stricken by a sudden fear !

Krishna, Arjun's chariot-driver, and a chief of righteous fame,
Marked the broken Pandav forces, spake in grief and bitter shame :

“Arjun, not in hour of battle hath it been thy wont to fly,
Forward lay thy path of glory, or to conquer or to die,

If to-day with angry Bhishma, Arjun shuns the dubious fight,
Shame on Krishna, if he joins thee in this sad inglorious flight,

Be it mine alone, O Arjun, warrior's wonted work to know,
Krishna with his fiery discus smites the all-resistless foe !”

Then he flung the reins to Arjun, left the steeds and sounding car,
Leaped upon the field of battle, rushed into the dreadful war,

“Shame,” cried Arjun in his anger, “Krishna shall not wage the fight,
Nor shall Arjun like a recreant seek for safety in his flight !”

And he dashed behind the warrior and on foot the chief pursued,
Caught him as the angry Krishna still his distant foeman viewed,

Stalwart Arjun lifted Krishna, as the storm lifts up a tree,
Placed him on his battle-chariot and he bent to him his knee :

“Pardon, Krishna, this compulsion, pardon this transgression hold,
But while Arjun lives, O chieftain, weapon of thy wrath withhold,

By my warlike Abhimanyu, fair Subhadra's darling boy,
By my brothers, dearer, truer, than in hours of 'pride and joy,

By my troth I pledge thee, Krishna,—let thy angry discus sleep,—
Archer Arjun meets his foeman, and his plighted word shall keep ! ”

Forthwith rushed the fiery Arjun in his sounding battle-car,
And like waves before him parted serried ranks of hostile war,

Vainly hurled his lance Duryodhan 'gainst the valiant warrior's face,
Vainly Salya, king of Madra, threw with skill his pond'rous mace,

With disdain the godlike Arjun dashed the feeble darts aside,
Held aloft his famed *Gandiva* as he stood with haughty pride,

Beat of drum and blare of *sankha* and the thunder of his car,
And his weapon's fearful accents rose terrific near and far !

Came resistless Pandav forces, sweeping onward wave on wave,
Chedis, Matsyas and Panchalas, chieftains true and warriors brave,

Onward too came forth the Kurus by the matchless Bhishma led,
Shouts arose and cry of anguish midst the dying and the dead,

But the evening closed in darkness and the night-fires fitful flared,
Fainting troops and bleeding chieftains to their various tents repaired !

IV

Duryodhan's Eight Brothers slain

Dawned another day of battle ; Kurus knew that day too well,
Widowed queens of fair Hastina wept before the evening fell,

For as whirlwind of destruction Bhima swept in mighty wrath,
Broke the serried line of tuskers vainly sent to cross his path,

Smote Duryodhan with his arrows, three terrific darts and five,
Smote proud Salya ; from the battle scarce they bore the chiefs alive !

Then Duryodhan's fourteen brothers rushed into the dreadful fray,
Fatal was the luckless moment, inauspicious was the day,

Licked his mouth the vengeful Bhima, and he shook his bow and lance,
As the lion lolls his red tongue when he sees his prey advance,

Short and fierce the furious combat ; six pale princes turned and fled,
Eight of proud Duryodhan's brothers fell and slumbered with the dead !

V

Satyaki's Sons slain

Morning with her fiery radiance oped the portals of the day,
Shone once more on Kuru warriors, Pandav chiefs in dread array,

Bhima and the gallant Arjun led once more the van of war,
But the proud preceptor Drona faced them in his sounding car.

Still with gallant son of Arjun, Lakshman strove with bow and shield,
Vainly strove ; his faithful henchman bore him bleeding from the field,

Lakshman son of proud Duryodhan, Abhimanyu Arjun's son,
Doomed to die in youth and glory 'neath the same revolving sun !

Sad the day for Vrishni warriors ! Brave Satyaki's sons of might
'Gainst the cruel Bhuri-sravas strove in unrelenting fight,

Ten brave brothers, pride of Vrishni, fell upon that fatal day,
Slain by mighty Bhuri-sravas on the battle's red field lay !

VI

Bhima's Danger and Rescue

Dawned another day of slaughter ; heedless Bhima forced his way
Through Duryodhan's serried legions, where dark death and danger lay,

And a hundred foemen gathered and unequal was the strife,
Bhima strove with furious valour for his forfeit was his life.

Fair Panchala's watchful monarch saw the danger from afar,
Forced his way where bleeding Bhima fought beside his shattered car,

And he helped the fainting warrior, placed him on his chariot-seat,
But the Kurus darkly gathered, surging round as waters meet.

Arjun's son and twelve brave chieftains dashed into the dubious fray,
Rescued Bhima and proud Drupad from the Kurus' grim array,

Surging still the Kuru forces onward came with ceaseless might,
Drona smote the scattered Pandavs till the darksome hours of night !

VII

Pandavs routed by Bhishma

Morning came and angry Arjun rushed into the dreadful war,
Krishna drove his milk-white coursers, onward flew his sounding car,

And before his monkey banner quailed the faint and frightened foes,
Till like star on billowy ocean Bhishma's palm-tree banner rose !

Vainly then the good Yudhishtir, stalwart Bhima, Arjun brave,
Strove with useless toil and valour shattered ranks of war to save,

Vainly too the Pandav brothers on the peerless Bhishma fell,
Gods in sky nor earthly warriors Bhishma's matchless might could quell,

Fell Yudhishtir's lofty standard, shook his chariot battle-tost,
Fell his proud and fiery coursers, and the dreadful day was lost,

Sahadeva and Nakula vainly strove with all their might,
Till their broken scattered forces rested in the shades of night !

VIII

Iravat slain

Morning saw the turn of battle ; Bhishma's charioteer was slain,
And his coursers uncontrôled flew across the reddened plain,

Ill it fared with Kuru forces when their leader went astray,
And their foremost chiefs and warriors with the dead and dying lay.

But Gandhara's mounted princes rode across the battle-ground,—
For its steeds and matchless chargers is Gandhara's realm renowned,

And to smite the young Iravat fierce Gandhara's princes swore,—
Brave Iravat son of Arjun, whom a Naga princess bore.

Mounted on their milk-white chargers proudly did the princes sweep,
Like the sea-birds skimming gaily o'er the bosom of the deep,

Five of stout Gandhara's princes in that fatal combat fell,
And a sixth in fear and faintness fled the woeful tale to tell.

Short, alas, Iravat's triumph, transient was the victor's joy,
Alambusha dark and dreadful came against the gallant boy,

Fierce and fateful was the combat, mournful is the tale to tell,
Like a lotus rudely severed gallant son of Arjun fell !

Arjun heard the tale of sorrow and his heart was filled with grief,
And he spake a father's anguish in his accents few and brief :

"Wherefore, Krishna, for a kingdom mingle in this fatal fray,
Kinsmen killed and comrades slaughtered,—dear, alas, the price we pay,

Woe unto Hastina's empire built upon our children's grave,
Dearer than the throne of monarchs was Iravat young and brave,

Young in years and rich in beauty, with thy mother's winsome eye,
Art thou slain, my gallant warrior, and thy father was not nigh ?

But thy young blood calls for vengeance ; noble Krishna drive the car,
Let them feel the father's prowess, those who slew the son in war !”

And he dashed the rising tear-drop and his words were few and brief,
Broken ranks and slaughtered chieftains spoke an angry father's grief,

Bhima too revenged Iravat, and as onward still he flew,
Brothers of the proud Duryodhan in that fatal combat slew,

Still advanced the fatal carnage till the darksome close of day,
When the wounded and the weary with the dead and dying lay !

IX

Pandavs routed by Bhishma

Fell the thickening shades of darkness on the red and ghastly plain,
Torches by the white tents flickered, red fires showed the countless slain

With a bosom sorrow-laden proud Duryodhan drew his breath,
Wept the issue of the battle and his warlike brothers' death.

Spent with grief and silent sorrow slow the Kuru monarch went
Where arose in dewy starlight Bhishma's proud and snowy tent,

And with tears and soft entreaty thus the sad Duryodhan spoke,
And his mournful bitter accents oft by heaving sighs were broke :

“Bhishma, on thy matchless prowess Kuru's hopes and fates depend,
Gods nor men with warlike Bhishma can in field of war contend,

Brave in war are sons of Pandu, but they face not Bhishma's might,
In their fierce and deathless hatred slay my brothers in the fight.

Mind thy pledge, O chief of Kurus, save Hastina's royal race,
On the ancient king my father grant thy never-failing grace,

If within thy noble bosom,—pardon cruel words I say,—
Secret love for sons of Pandu holds a soft and partial sway,

Thy inner heart's affections unto Pandu's sons incline,
Grant that Karna lead my forces 'gainst the foeman's hostile line !"

Bhishma's heart was full of sadness and his eyelids dropped a tear,
Soft and mournful were his accents and his vision true and clear :

"Vain, Duryodhan, is this contest, and thy mighty host is vain,
Why with blood of friendly nations drench this red and reeking plain ?"

They must win who, strong in virtue, fight for virtue's stainless laws,
Doubly armed the stalwart warrior who is armed in righteous cause,

Think, Duryodhan, when *Gandharvas* took thee captive and a slave,
Did not Arjun rend thy fetters, Arjun righteous chief and brave,

When in Matsya's fields of pasture we secured Virata's kine,
Did not Arjun in his valour beat thy countless force and mine ?

Krishna now hath come to Arjun, Krishna drives his battle-car,
Gods nor men can face these heroes in the field of righteous war,

Ruin frowns on thee, Duryodhan, and upon thy impious State,
In thy pride and in thy folly thou hast courted cruel fate,

Bhishma still will do his duty, and his end it is not far,
Then may other chieftains follow,—fatal is this Kuru war !"

Dawned a day of mighty slaughter and of dread and deathful war,
Ancient Bhishma in his anger drove once more his sounding car,

Morn to noon and noon to evening none could face the victor's wrath,
Broke and shattered, faint and frightened, Pandavs fled before his path,

Still amidst the dead and dying moved his proud resistless car,
Till the gathering night and darkness closed the horrors of the war !

X

Fall of Bhishma

Good Yudhishtir gazed with sorrow on the dark and ghastly plain,
Shed his tears on chiefs and warriors by the matchless Bhishma slain :

"Vain this unavailing battle, vain this woeful loss of life,
Gainst the death-compelling Bhishma hopeless is this arduous strife,

As a lordly tusker tramples on a marsh of feeble reeds,
As a forest conflagration on the patched woodland feeds,

Bhishma tramples on my forces in his mighty battle-car,
God nor mortal chief can face him in the gory field of war,

Vain our toil and vain the valour of our kinsmen loved and lost,
Vainly fight my faithful brothers by a luckless fortune crost,

Nations pour their life-blood vainly, ceaseless wakes the sound of woe,
Krishna, stop this cruel carnage, unto woods once more we go !"

Sad they held a midnight council and the chiefs in silence met,
And they went to ancient Bhishma, love and mercy to entreat,

Bhishma loved the sons of Pandu with a father's loving heart,
But from troth unto Duryodhan righteous Bhishma would not part.

"Sons of Pandu," said the chieftain, "Prince Duryodhan is my lord,
Bhishma is no faithless servant nor will break his plighted word,

Valiant are ye, noble princes, but the chief is yet unborn,
While I lead the course of battle, who the tide of war can turn.

Listen more. With vanquished foeman, or who falls or takes to flight,
Casts his weapons, craves for mercy, ancient Bhishma doth not fight,

Bhishma doth not fight a rival who submits, fatigued and worn,
Bhishma doth not fight the wounded, doth not fight a woman born !"

Back unto their tents the Pandavs with the thoughtful Krishna came,
And unto the anxious Arjun whispered Dwarka's chief of fame :

Arjun, there is hope of triumph. Hath not truthful Bhishma sworn,
He will fight no wounded warrior, he will fight no woman born ?

Female child was brave Sikhandin, Drupad's youngest son of pride,
Gods have turned him to a warrior, placed him by Yudhishtir's side,

Place him in the van of battle, mighty Bhishma leave the strife,
Then with ease we fight and conquer, and the forfeit is his life !"

Shame !" exclaimed the angry Arjun, "not in secret heroes fight,
Not behind a child or woman screen their valour and their might,

Krishna, loth is archer Arjun to pursue this hateful strife,
Trick against the sinless Bhishma, fraud upon his spotless life.

Listen, good and noble Krisna ; as a child I climbed his knee,
As a boy I called him father, hung upon him lovingly,

Perish conquest dearly purchased by a mean deceitful strife,
Perish crown and jewelled sceptre won with Bhishma's saintly life !"

Travely answered noble Krishna : "Bhishma falls by close of day,
Victim to the cause of virtue, he himself hath showed the way,

Fear or hated be the foeman, Arjun, thou shalt fight and slay,
Therefore else the blood of nations hast thou poured from day to day ?"

Morning dawned, and mighty Arjun, Abhimanyu young and bold,
Drupad monarch of Panchala, and Virata stern and old,

Came Yudhishtir and his brothers clad in arms and shining mail,
Pushed to war where Bhishma's standard gleamed and glittered in the gale.

And Duryodhan marked their onset and its fatal purpose knew,
And his bravest men and chieftains 'gainst the fiery Pandavs threw,

With Kamboja's stalwart monarch and with Drona's mighty son,
With the valiant bowman Kripa stemmed the battle still unwon.

And his younger, fierce Duhsasan, thirsting for the deathful war,
'Gainst the helmet-wearing Arjun drew his mighty battle-car,

As a high and rugged mountain meets the angry ocean's sway,
Proud Duhsasan warred with Arjun in his wild and onward way,

And as myriad white-winged sea-birds swoop upon the darksome wave
Clouds of darts and glistening lances drank the red blood of the brave

Other warlike Kuru chieftains came, the bravest and the best,
Drona's self and Bhagadatta monarch of the farthest East,

Car-borne Salya mighty warrior, king of Madra's distant land,
Princes from Avanti's regions, chiefs from Malwa's rocky strand,

Jayadratha matchless fighter, king of Sindhu's sounding shore,
Chitrasena and Vikarna, countless chiefs and warriors more.

And they faced the fiery Pandavs peerless in their warlike might,
Long and dreadful raged the combat, darkly closed the dubious fight

Dust arose like clouds of summer, glistening darts like lightning play
Darksome grew the sky with arrows, thicker grew the gloomy shade

Cars went down and mailed horsemen, soldiers fell in dread array,
Elephants with white tusks broken and with mangled bodies lay.

Arjun and the stalwart Bhima piercing through their countless foes
Side by side impelled their chariots where the palm-tree standard rose

Where the peerless ancient Bhishma on that dark and fatal day,
Warring with the banded nations still resistless held his way.

On he came, his palm-tree standard still the front of battle knew,
And like sun from dark clouds parting Bhishma burst on Arjun's view

And his eyes brave Arjun shaded at the awe-inspiring sight,
Half he wished to turn for shelter from that chief of godlike might

At bold Krishna drove his chariot, whispered low his fatal plan,
 Arjun placed the young Sikhandin in the deathful battle's van,

Bhishma viewed the Pandav forces with a calm unmoving face,
 saw not Arjun's fair *Gandiva*, saw not Bhima's mighty mace,

Wished to see the young Sikhandin rushing to the battle's fore,
 Like the foam upon the billow when the mighty storm-winds roar.

Bhishma thought of word he plighted and of oath that he had sworn,
 Opposed his arms before the warrior who a female child was born,

And the standard which no warrior ever saw in base retreat,
 Firmly stood upon the chariot, threw its shade on Bhishma's seat,

And the flagstaff fell dissevered on the crushed and broken car,
 From azure sky of midnight falls the meteor's flaming star.

At Sikhandin's feeble arrows did the palm-tree standard fell,
 At Sikhandin's feeble lances did the peerless Bhishma quell,

Due to oath and unresisting, Bhishma turned his face away,
 Felled and fell ; the sun declining marked the closing of the day !

Ended thus the fatal battle, truce came with the close of day,
 Arjuna and the silent Pandavs went where Bhishma dying lay,

Arjuna wept as for a father weeps a sad and sorrowing son,
 And Yudhishtir cursed the morning Kuru-kshetra's war begun,

And Duryodhan and his brothers mantled in the gloom of grief,
 As like loving brothers sorrowed round the great the dying chief.

Arjuna's keen and pointed arrows made the hero's dying bed,
 And in soft and gentle accents to Duryodhan thus he said :

Unto my words, Duryodhan, uttered with my latest breath,
 To Bhishma's dying counsel and revere the voice of death,

This dread and deathful battle if thy stony heart can grieve,
 The chieftains doomed to slaughter, bid the fated nations live,

Grant his kingdom to Yudhishtir righteous man beloved of Heaven,
Keep thy own Hastina's regions, be the hapless past forgiven !”

Vain, alas, the voice of Bhishma like the voice of angel spoke,
Hatred dearer than his life-blood in the proud Duryodhan woke !

Darker grew the gloomy midnight and the princes went their way,
On his bed of pointed arrows Bhishma lone and dying lay,

Karna, though he loved not Bhishma whilst the chieftain lived in fame,
Gently to the dying Bhishma in the midnight darkness came,

Bhishma heard the tread of Karna and he oped his glazing eye,
Spake in love and spake in sadness and his bosom heaved a sigh :

“Pride and envy, noble Karna, filled our warlike hearts with strife,
Discord ends with breath departing, envy sinks with fleeting life.

More I have to tell thee, Karna, but my parting breath may fail,
Feeble are my dying accents and my parchéd lips are pale,

Arjun beats not noble Karna in the deeds of valour done,
Nor excels in birth and lineage, Karna, thou art Pritha's son.

Pritha bore thee, still unwedded, and the Sun inspired thy birth,
God-born man ! No mightier archer tread this broad and spacious earth,

Pritha cast thee in her sorrow, hid thee with a maiden's shame,
And driver, not thy father, nursed thee, chief of warlike fame,

Arjun is thy brother, Karna, end this sad fraternal war,
Seek not life-blood of thy brother nor against him drive thy car !”

Vain, alas, the voice of Bhishma like the voice of angel spoke,
Hatred dearer than his life-blood in the vengeful Karna woke !

BOOK IX

DRONA - B A D H A

(*Fall of Drona*)

ON the fall of Bhishma the Brahman chief Drona, preceptor of the Kuru and Pandav princes, was appointed the leader of the Kuru forces. For five days Drona held his own against the Pandavs, and some of the incidents of these days, like the fall of Abhimanyu and the vengeance of Arjun, are among the most stirring passages in the Epic. The description of the different standards of the Pandav and the Kuru warriors is also interesting. At last Drona slew his ancient foe the king of the Panchalas, and was then slain by his son the prince of the Panchalas.

The Book is an abridgment of Book vii. of the original text.

I

Single combat between Bhima and Salya

Morning dawned upon the battle ; Pandav warriors heard with dread,
Drona priest and proud preceptor now the Kuru forces led,

And the foe-compelling Drona pledged his troth and solemn word,
He would take Yudhishtir captive to Hastina's haughty lord.

And the ever faithful Arjun to his virtuous elder bowed,
And in clear and manful accents spake his warlike thoughts aloud :

Sacred is our great preceptor, sacred is *acharya's* life,
Arjun may not slay his teacher even in this mortal strife,

Saving this, command, O monarch, Arjun's bow and warlike sword,
For thy safety, king and elder, Arjun stakes his plighted word,

Matchless in the art of battle is our teacher fierce and dread,
But he comes not to Yudhishtir save o'er blood of Arjun shed ! ”

Morning witnessed doughty Drona foremost in the battle's tide,
But Yudhishtir's warlike chieftains compassed him on every side,

Foremost of the youthful chieftains came resistless Arjun's son,—
Father's blood and milk of mother fired his deeds of valour done.

As the lion of the jungle drags the ox into his lair,
Abhimanyu from his chariot dragged Paurava by the hair,

Jayadratha king of Sindhu marked the faint and captive chief,
Leaping from his car of battle wrathful came to his relief,

Abhimanyu left his captive, turned upon the mightier foe,
And with sword and hardened buckler gave and parried many a blow.

Rank to rank from both the forces cry of admiration rose,
Streaming men poured forth in wonder, watched the combat fierce and close

Piercing Abhimayu's buckler Jayadratha sent his stroke,
But the turned and twisted sword-blade snapping in the midway broke.

Weaponless the king of Sindhu ran into his sheltering car,
Salya came unto his rescue from a battle-field afar,

Dauntless, on the new assailant Arjun's son his weapon drew,
Interposing 'twixt the fighters Bhima's self on Salya flew !

Stoutest wrestlers in the armies, fiercest fighters with the mace,
Bhima and the stalwart Salya stood as rivals face to face,

Hempen fastening bound their maces and the wire of twisted gold,
Whirling bright in circling flashes, shook their staff the warriors bold,

Of it they struck, and sparks of red fire issued from the seasoned wood,
And like hornéd bulls infuriate Madra's king and Bhima stood,

Closer still they came like tigers closing with their reddened paws,
Or like tuskers with their red tusks, eagles with their rending claws.

Loud as INDRA'S peals of thunder still their blows were echoed round,
Rank to rank the startled soldiers heard the oft-repeated sound,

But as strikes in vain the lightning on the solid mountain-rock,
Bhima nor the fearless Salya fell or moved beneath the shock,

Closer drew the watchful heroes and their clubs were wielded well,
Kill by many blows belaboured both the fainting fighters fell,

Like a drunkard dazed and reeling Bhima rose his staff to wield,
Senseless Salya, heavy-breathing, henchman lifted from the field,

Writhing like a wounded serpent, from the blood-stained field of war,
He was carried by his soldiers to the shelter of his car !

Drona still with matchless prowess strove to keep his plighted word,
Sought to take the bold Yudhishtir captive unto Kuru's lord,

Vainly then the twin-born brothers came to cross the conqueror's path,
Matsya's lord, Panchala's monarch, vainly faced him in his wrath,

Rank to rank the cry resounded circling o'er the battle-field,
Drona takes Yudhishtir captive with his bow and sword and shield."

Arjun heard the dreadful message and in haste and fury came,
Drove to save his king and elder and redeem his royal fame,

Speeding with his milk-white coursers dashed into the thick of war,
Slew his shrill and dreaded *sankha*, drove his sounding battle-car,

Piercer, darker grew the battle, when above the reddened plain,
Evening drew her peaceful mantle o'er the living and the slain !

II

Standards of the Pandavs

Morning came ; still round Yudhishtir Drona led the surging war,
Arjun fought the Sam-saptakas in a battle-field afar,

But the prince of fair Panchala marked his father's ancient foe,
And against the doughty Drona, Dhrishta-dyumna bent his bow,

But as darksome cloudy masses angry gusts of storm divide,
Through the scattered ranks of foemen Drona drove his car in pride,

Steeds went down and riven chariots, young Panchala turned and fled,
Onward drove resistless Drona o'er the dying and the dead !

One more prince of fair Panchala 'gainst the mighty Drona came,
Ancient feud ran in the red blood of Panchala's chiefs of fame,

Fated youth ! with reckless valour still he fought his father's foe,
Fought and fell ; relentless Drona laid the brave Satyajit low !

Surging still like ocean's billows other Pandav warriors came,
To protect their virtuous monarch and redeem their ancient fame,

Came in various battle-chariots drawn by steeds of every hue,
Various were the chieftains' standards which the warring nations knew.

Bhima drove his stalwart horses tinted like the dappled deer,
Grey and pегion-coloured coursers bore Panchala's prince and peer,

Horses bred in famed Kamboja, glossy dark of deepest hue,
Brave Nakula's sumptuous chariot in the deathful battle drew,

Piebald horses trained to battle did young Sahadeva rein,
Ivory-white Yudhishtir's coursers with their flowing ebon mane,

And by him with gold umbrella valiant monarch Drupad came,
Horses of a bright bay-colour carried Matsya's king of fame.

Varied as their various coursers, gallantly their standards rose,
With their wondrous strange devices, terror of their armed foes,

Water-jar on tawny deerskin, such was Drona's sign of war,—
Drona as a little infant rested in a water-jar,—

Golden moon with stars surrounding was Yudhishthir's sign of yore,
Silver lion was the standard tiger-waisted Bhima bore,

Brave Nakula's sign was red deer with its back of burnished gold,
Silver swan with bells resounding Sahadeva's onset told,

Golden peacock rich-emblazoned was young Abhimanyu's joy,
Vulture shone on Ghatotkacha, Bhima's proud and gallant boy.

Now Duryodhan marked the foemen heaving like the rising tide,
And he faced the wrathful Bhima towering in his tameless pride,

Short the war ; for proud Duryodhan wounded from the battle fled,
And his warriors from fair Anga rested with the countless dead !

Wild with anger Bhagadatta, monarch of the farthest East,
With his still unconquered forces on the valiant Bhima pressed,

Came from far the wrathful Arjun and the battle's front he sought,
Where by eastern foes surrounded still the stalwart Bhima fought,

ated monarch of the far-east, lord of Brahma-putra's shore,
and of rising sun will hail him and his noble peers no more,

or his tusker pierced by arrows trumpeted his dying wail,
like a red and flaming meteor gallant Bhagadatta fell !

hen with rising wrath and anguish Karna's noble bosom bled,—
arna who had stayed from battle while his rival Bhishma led,—

ncient hate and jealous anger clouded Karna's warlike heart,
nd while Bhishma led, all idly slumbered Karna's bow and dart,

ow he marked with warrior's anguish all his comrades fled afar,
nd his foeman Arjun sweeping o'er the red field of the war.

Hatred like a tongue of red fire shot from Karna's flaming eye,
And he sprang to meet his foeman or to conquer or to die,

Fierce and dubious was the battle, answering clouds gave back the din,
Karna met his dearest foeman and, alas, his nearest kin,

Bhima and Panchala's warriors unto Ariun's rescue came,
Proud Duryodhan came to Karna, and fair Sindhu's king of fame,

Fiercely raged the gory combat, when the night its shadows threw,
Wounded men and blood-stained chieftains to their nightly tents withdrew

III

Abhimanyu's Death

Fatal was the blood-red morning purpling o'er the angry east,
Fatal day for Abhimanyu, bravest warrior and the best,

Countless were the gallant chieftains like the sands beside the sea,
None with braver bosom battled, none with hands more stout and free

Brief, alas, thy radiant summers, fair Subhadra's gallant boy,
Loved of Matsya's soft-eyed princess and her young heart's pride and joy

Brief, alas, thy sunlit winters, light of war too early quenched,
Peerless son of peerless Arjun, in the blood of foemen drenched !

Drona on that fatal morning ranged his dreadful battle-line
In a circle darkly spreading where the chiefs with chiefs combine,

And the Pandavs looked despairing on the battle's dread array,
Vainly strove to force a passage, vainly sought their onward way,

Abhimanyu, young and fiery, dashed alone into the war,
Reckless through the shattered forces all resistless drove his car,

Elephants and crashing standards, neighing steeds and warriors slain
fell before the furious hero as he made a ghastly lane !

Proud Duryodhan rushed to battle, strove to stop the turning tide,
and his stoutest truest warriors fought by proud Duryodhan's side,

Onward still went Abhimanyu, Kurus strove and fought in vain,
backward reeled and fell Duryodhan and his bravest chiefs were slain !

Next came Salya car-borne monarch 'gainst the young resistless foe,
Urged his fiery battle-coursers, stretched his death-compelling bow,

Onward still went Abhimanyu, Salya strove and fought in vain,
and his warriors took him bleeding from the reddened battle-plain !

Next Duhsasan darkly lowering thundered with his bended bow,
Abhimanyu smiled to see him, kinsman and the dearest foe,

"Art thou he," said Abhimanyu, "known for cruel word and deed,
impious in thy heart and purpose, base and ruthless in thy greed ?

Didst thou with the false Sakuni win a realm by low device,
Win his kingdom from Yudhishtir by ignoble trick of dice,

Didst thou in the council chamber with thy insults foul and keen
by her flowing raven tresses drag Yudhishtir's stainless queen,

Didst thou speak to warlike Bhima as thy serf and bounden slave,
Wrong my father righteous Arjun, peerless prince and warrior brave ?

Welcome ! I have sought thee often, wished to cross thy tainted path,
Welcome ! Dearest of all victims to my nursed and cherished wrath,

Reap the meed of sin and insult, draw on earth thy latest breath,
For I owe to Queen Draupadi, impious prince, thy speedy death !"

Like a snake upon an ant-hill, on Duhsasan's wicked heart
fell with hissing wrath and fury Abhimanyu's fiery dart,

From the loss of blood Dushasan fainted on his battle-car,
Kuru chieftains bore him senseless from the blood-stained scene of war !

Next in gleaming arms accoutred came Duryodhan's gallant son,
Proud and warlike as his father, famed for deeds of valour done,

Young in years and rich in valour, for alas, he fought too well,
And before his weeping father proud and gallant Lakshman fell !

Onward still went Abhimanyu midst the dying and the dead,
Shook from rank to rank the Kurus and their shattered army fled,

Then the impious Jayadratha, king of Sindhu's sounding shore,
Came forth in unrighteous concert with six car-borne warriors more,

Darkly closed the fatal circle with the gulping surge's moan,
Dauntless with the seven brave chieftains Abhimanyu fought alone.

Fell, alas, his peacock standard and his car was broke in twain,
Bow and sabre rent and shattered and his faithful driver slain,

Heedless yet of death and danger, misty with the loss of blood,
Abhimanyu wiped his forehead, gazed where dark his foemen stood.

Then with wild despairing valour, flickering flame of closing life,
Mace in hand the heedless warrior rushed to end the mortal strife,

Rushed upon his startled foemen, Abhimanyu fought and fell,
And his deeds to distant ages bards and wand'ring minstrels tell !

Like a tusker of the forest by surrounding hunter slain,
Like a wood-consuming wildfire quenched upon the distant plain,

Like a mountain-shaking tempest spent in force and hushed and still,
Like the red resplendent day-god setting on the western hill,

Like the moon serene and beauteous quenched in eclipse dark and pale
Lifeless slumbered Abhimanyu when the softened starlight fell !

Done the day of death and slaughter, darkening shadows closed around
Wearied warriors sought for shelter on the vast and tented ground,

Soldiers' camp-fires brightly blazing, tent-lights shining from afar,
Cast their fitful gleam and radiance on the carnage of the war.

from a field at distance, where upon that day he fought,
 with the ever faithful Krishna now his nightly shelter sought,

Therefore, Krishna," uttered Arjun, "evil omens strike my eye,
 thoughts of sadness fill my bosom, wake the long-forgotten sigh,

Therefore voice of evening bugle speaks not on the battle-field,
 merry conch nor sounding trumpet music to the warriors yield ?

Arjun is hushed within the dark tents and the voice of warlike song,
 words beside the evening camp-fire tales of war do not prolong,

And Yudhishtir's tent is voiceless and my brothers look so pale,
 Abhimanyu comes not joyous Krishna and his sire to hail,

Abhimanyu's love and greeting bless like blessings from above,
 his Subhadra's joy and treasure, Arjun's pride and hope and love !"

Swiftly and with many tear-drops did the sad Yudhishtir tell,
 how in dreadful field of battle gallant Abhimanyu fell,

How the impious Jayadratha fell on Arjun's youthful son,—
 and with six proud Kuru chieftains,—Abhimanyu all alone,—

How the young prince reft of weapon and deprived of steed and car,
 all as falls a Kshatra warrior fighting on the field of war !

Arjun heard ; the father's bosom felt the cruel cureless wound,
 "O brave and gallant boy !" he uttered as he sank upon the ground,

Moments passed of voiceless sorrow and of speechless bitter tear,
 as within his mailed bosom smote the weeping listener's ear !

Moments passed ; with rising anger quivered Arjun's iron frame,
 Abhimanyu's cruel murder smote the father's heart to flame,

Must thou say that Sindhu's monarch on my Abhimanyu bore,—
 alone, — and Jayadratha leagued with six marauders more,—

Didst thou say the impious Kurus stooped unto this deed of shame,
 Outrage on the laws of honour, stain upon a warrior's fame ?

Father's curse and warrior's hatred sting them to their dying breath,
 For they feared my boy in battle, hunted him to cruel death,

Hear my vow, benign Yudhishtir, hear me, Krishna righteous lord,
 Arjun's hand shall slay the slayer, Arjun plights his solemn word !

May I never reach the bright sky where the righteous fathers dwell,
 May I with the darkest sinners live within the deepest hell,—

With the men who slay their fathers, shed their loving mothers' blood,
 Stain the sacred bed of *gurus*, steal their gold and holy food,

Cherish envy, cheat their kinsmen, speak the low and dastard lie,—
 If, ere comes to-morrow's sunset, Jayadratha doth not die,

Jayadratha dies to-morrow, victim to my vengeful ire,
 Arjun else shall yield his weapons, perish on the flaming pyre !”

Softer tear-drops wept the mother, joyless was Subhadra's life,
 Krishna's fair and honoured sister, Arjun's dear and loved wife :

“Dost thou lie on field of battle smeared with dust and foeman's gore,
 Child of light and love and sweetness whom thy hapless mother bore,

Soft thine eye as budding lotus, sweet and gentle was thy face,
 Are those soft eyes closed in slumber, faded is that peerless grace,

And thy limbs so young and tender, on the bare earth do they lie,
 Where the hungry jackal prowleth and the vulture flutters nigh,

Gold and jewels graced thy bosom, gems bedecked thy lofty crest,
 Doth the crimson mark of sabre decorate that manly breast ?

Rend Subhadra's stony bosom with a mother's cureless grief,
 Let her follow Abhimanyu and in death obtain relief,

Earth to me is void and cheerless, joyless is my hearth and home,
 Dreary without Abhimanyu is this weary world to roam !

and oh ! cheerless is that young heart, Abhimanyu's princess-wife,
 that can sad Subhadra offer to her joyless sunless life,

whose our life in equal darkness for our day on earth is done,
 for our love and light and treasure, Abhimanyu, he is gone ! "

Drupad bewailed the anguished mother, fair Draupadi tore her hair,
 Subhadra's princess early widowed shed her young heart's blood in tear !

IV

Standards of the Kurus : Arjun's Revenge

Morning from the face of battle night's depending curtain drew,
 Arjun sang and shrill his sounding *sankha* then the wrathful Arjun blew,

Arjun knew the vow of Arjun, heard the *sankha's* deathful blare,
 and it rose above the red field, thrilled the startled morning air,

"Speed, my Krishna," out spake Arjun, as he held aloft his bow,
 "For to-day my task is dreadful, cruel is my mighty vow !"

Many coursers urged by Krishna flew with lightning's rapid course,
 rushing through the hostile warriors and the serried Kuru force,

Arjuna, Duryodhana faced the hero but he strove and fought in vain,
 onward thundered Arjun's chariot o'er the dying and the slain,

Arjuna, Duryodhana with his tuskers rushed into the line of war,
 but the tuskers broke in panic, onward still went Arjun's car !

Arjuna, priest and proud preceptor, Arjun's furious progress stayed,
 Arjuna's words filled the eye of Arjun as these gentle words he said :

"Pardon, father, if thy pupil shuns to-day thy offered war,
 against my Abhimanyu's slayer speeds my restless battle-car,

but against my great *acharya* is my wrathful bow-string drawn,
 but against a loving father fights a fond and duteous son !

Heavy on this bleeding bosom sits the darkening load of woe,
And an injured father's vengeance seeks the slaughtered hero's foe,

Pardon then if sorrowing Arjun seeks a far and distant way,
Mighty is the vow of Arjun, cruel is his task to-day !"

Passing by the doughty Drona onward sped the fiery car,
Through the broken line of warriors, through the shattered ranks of war,

Angas and the brave Kalingas vainly crossed his wrathful way,
Proud Avantis from the regions where fair Chambal's waters stray,

Famed Avanti's fated princes vainly led their highland force,
Fell beneath the wrath of Arjun, stayed nor stopped his onward course,

Onward still with speed of lightning thundered Arjun's battle-car,
To the spot where Jayadratha stood behind the ranks of war !

Now the sun from highest zenith red and fiery radiance lent,
Long and weary was the passage, Arjun's foaming steeds were spent,

"Arjun !" said the faithful Krishna, "arduous is thy cruel quest,
But thy foaming coursers falter and they need a moment's rest,"

"Be it so," brave Arjun answered, "from our chariot we alight,
Rest awhile the weary horses, Krishna, I will watch the fight !"

Speaking thus the armed Arjun lightly leaped upon the lea,
Stood on guard with bow and arrow by a green and shady tree,

Krishna groomed the jaded horses, faint and feeble, red with gore,
With a healing hand he tended wounds the bleeding coursers bore,

Watered them beside a river by the zephyrs soft caressed,
Gave unto them welcome fodder, gave unto them needful rest,

Thus refreshed, the noble coursers Krishna harnessed to the car,
And the gleaming helméd Arjun rushed once more to fatal war !

Came on him the Kuru warriors, darksome wave succeeding wave,
Standards decked with strange devices, streaming banners rich and brave,

Foremost was the glorious standard of preceptor Drona's son,
Lion's tail in golden brilliance on his battle-chariot shone,

Elephant's rope was Karna's ensign made of rich and burnished gold,
And a bull bedecked the standard of the bowman Kripa bold,

Peacock made of precious metal, decked with jewels rich and rare,
Trishasena's noble standard shone aloft serene and fair,

Ploughshare of a golden lustre shining like the radiant flame,
Spoke the car of mighty Salya, Madra's king of warlike fame,

Far and guarded well by chieftains shone the dazzling silver-boar,
Ensign proud of Jayadratha brought from Sindhu's sounding shore,

On the car of Somadatta shone a stake of sacrifice,
Silver boar and golden parrots, these were Salya's proud device,

Last and brightest of the standards, on the prince Duryodhan's car,
Wardly elephant in jewels proudly shone above the war!

Nine heroic Kuru chieftains, bravest warriors and the best,
Leagued they came to grapple Arjun and on faithful Krishna pressed,

Arjun swept like sweeping whirlwind all resistless in his force,
Fought no foe and waged no combat, held his ever onward course,

For he sighted Jayadratha midst the circling chiefs of war,
Gainst that warrior, grim and silent, Arjun drove his furious car!

Now the day-god rolled his chariot on the western clouds aflame,
Karna's self and five great chieftains round brave Jayadratha came,

Mainly strove the valiant Arjun struggling 'gainst the Kuru line,
Charged upon the peerless Karna as he marked the day's decline,

Krishna then a prayer whispered; came a friendly sable cloud,
Veiled the red sun's dazzling brilliance in a dark and inky shroud!

Karna deemed the closing darkness now proclaimed the close of strife
Failing in his plighted promise Arjun must surrender life,

And his comrade chiefs rejoicing slackened in their furious fight,
Jayadratha hailed with gladness thickening shades of welcome night !

In that sad and fatal error did the Kuru chiefs combine,
Arjun quick as bolt of lightning broke their all unguarded line,

Like an onward-sweeping wildfire shooting forth its lolling tongue,
On the startled Jayadratha, Arjun in his fury flung !

Short the strife ; as angry falcon swoops upon its helpless prey,
Arjun sped his vengeful arrow and his foeman lifeless lay,

Friendly winds removed the dark cloud from the reddening western hill,
And the sun in crimson lustre cast its fiery radiance still !

Ere the evening's mantling darkness fell o'er distant hill and plain,
Proud Duryodhan's many brothers were by vengeful Bhima slain,

And Duryodhan stung by sorrow waged the still unceasing fight,
In the thick and gathering darkness torches lit the gloom of night !

Karna, furious in his anger for his Jayadratha slain,
And for brothers of Duryodhan sleeping lifeless on the plain,

'Gainst the gallant son of Bhima drove his deep resounding car,
And in gloom and midnight darkness waked the echoes of the war !

Bhima's son brave Ghatotkacha twice the steeds of Karna slew,
Twice the humbled steedless Karna from the dubious battle flew,

Came again the fiery Karna, vengeance flamed within his heart,
Like the midnight's lurid lightning sped his fell and fatal dart,

Woeful was the hour of darkness, luckless was the starry sway,
Bhima's son in youth and valour lifeless on the red field lay !

Then was closed the midnight battle, silent shone the starry light,
Bhima knew nor rest nor slumber through the long and woeful night !

V

Fall of Drona

ere the crimson morning glittered, proud Duryodhan sad at heart,
to the leader of the Kurus did his sorrows thus impart :

Sadly speeds the contest, Drona, on the battle's gory plain,
Kuru chiefs are thinned and fallen and my brothers mostly slain,

Can it be, O best of Brahmins, peerless in the art of war,
Can it be that we shall falter while thou speed'st the battle-car ?

Pandu's sons are all thy pupils, Arjun meets thee not in fight,
None can face the great *acharya* in his wrath and warlike might,

Therefore then in every battle are the Kuru chieftains slain,
Therefore lie my warlike brothers lifeless on the ghastly plain ?

Is it that the fates of battle 'gainst the Kuru house combine,
Is it that thy heart's affection doth to Pandu's sons incline,

Is thy secret love and mercy still the sons of Pandu claim,
Wouldst thou yield thy place to gallant Karna, Anga's prince of warlike fame ! ”

Answered Drona brief and wrathful : “ Fair Gandhari's royal son,
Reapest thou the gory harvest of thy sinful actions done,

Must no blame in youth's presumption on a warrior's fleecy hair,
Faithful unto death is Drona to his promise plightéd fair !

Ask thyself, O prince Duryodhan, bound by battle's sacred laws,
Therefore fightest not with Arjun for thy house and for thy cause,

Ask the dark and deep Sakuni, where is now his low device,
Therefore wields he not his weapon as he wields he loaded dice,

Ask the chief who proudly boasted, archer Arjun he would slay,
Learnéd Arjun sways the battle, whither now doth Karna stay ?

Know the truth ; the gallant Arjun hath no peer on earth below,
And no warrior breathes, Duryodhan, who can face thy helméd foe,

Drona knows his sacred duty, and 'tis willed by Heaven on high,
Arjun or preceptor Drona shall in this day's battle die !”

Now the Sun in crimson splendour rolled his car of glistening gold,
Sent his shafts of purple radiance on the plain and mountain bold,

And from elephant and charger, from each bravely bannered car,
Lighted mailéd kings and chieftains and the leaders of the war,

Faced the sun with hands uplifted and the sacred *mantra* told,—
Hymns by ancient *rishis* chanted, sanctified by bards of old !

Worship done, each silent warrior mounted on his car or steed,
Onward to the deathful contest did his gallant forces lead,

Ill it fared with Pandav forces, doughty Drona took the field,
Peer was none midst living warriors of the Brahman trained and skilled

Arjun, faithful to his promise, his perceptor would not fight,
King nor chief nor other archer dared to face his peerless might !

But old feud like potent poison fires the warrior's heart with strife,
Sire to son still unforgotten leaps the hate from death to life,

Wrathful princes of Panchala by their deathless hatred stung,
Saw their ancient foe in Drona and on him for vengeance sprung !

Darkly thought the ancient warrior of the old relentless feud,
Fiercely like a jungle-tiger fell upon the hostile brood,

Royal Drupad's valiant grandsons in their youth untimely slain,
Victims of a deathless discord, pressed the gory battle-plain !

Drupad pale with grief and anger marked his gallant grandsons dead,
And his army crushed and routed and his bravest chieftains fled,

Filled with unforgotten hatred and with father's grief and pride,
Rushed the king, and bold Virata charged by doughty Drupad's side

rose a cry of nameless terror o'er the red and ghastly plain,
 noble Drupad, brave Virata, lay among the countless slain,

weeping tears the proud Draupadi wept for noble father killed,
 maid and matron with their wailing fair Panchala's empire filled,

Utsya's joyless widowed princess, for her fate was early crost,
 wept with added tears and anguish for her father loved and lost !

aged the war with fearful slaughter, Drona onward urged his way,
 fate alone and battle's chances changed the fortunes of the day,

Aswa-thaman son of Drona was a chief of peerless fame,
 and an elephant of battle bore that chieftain's warlike name,

and that proud and lordly tusker Bhima in his prowess slew,
 sank to rank from friend to foe man then a garbled message flew :

"Aswa-thaman son of Drona is by mighty Bhima slain,"
 Drona heard that fatal message, bent his anguished head in pain !

"Speak Yudhishtir, soul of virtue !" thus the proud preceptor cried,
 "Thou in truth hast never faltered and thy lips have never lied,

peak of valiant Aswa-thaman, Drona's hope and pride and joy,
 hath he fallen in this battle, is he slain, my gallant boy,

feeble are the hands of Drona and his prowess quenched and gone,
 feeble are his ancient tresses and his earthly task is done ! "

and Yudhishtir thus in answer : "Tusker Aswa-thaman's dead,"
 Drona heard but half the accents, feebly drooped his sinking head !

Then the prince of fair Panchala swiftly drove across the plain,
 marked his father's cruel slayer, marked his noble father slain,

Christa-dyumna bent his weapon and his shaft was pointed well,
 and the priest and proud preceptor, peerless Drona lifeless fell,

And the fatal day was ended, Kurus fled in abject fear,
 Arjun for his ancient teacher dropped a silent filial tear !

BOOK X.

KARNA-BADHA

(Fall of Karna)

KARNA was chosen as the leader of the Kuru forces after the death of Drona, and held his own for two days. The great contest between Karna and Arjun, long expected and long deferred, came on at last. It is the crowning incident of the Indian Epic, as the contest between Hector and Achilles is the crowning incident of the Iliad. With a truer skill than that of Homer, the Indian poet represents Karna as equal to Arjun in strength and valour, and his defeat is only due to an accident.

After the death of Karna, Salya led the Kuru troops on the eighteenth and last day of the war, and fell. A midnight slaughter in the Pandav camp, perpetrated by the vengeful son of Drona, concludes the war. Duryodhan, left wounded by Bhima, heard of the slaughter and died happy.

Books viii., ix., and x. of the original have been abridged in this Book.

I

Karna and Arjun meet

Sights of red and ghastly carnage day disclosed upon the plain,
Mighty chiefs and countless warriors round the warlike Drona slain,

Sad Duryodhan gazed in sorrow and the tear was in his eye,
Till his glances fell on Karna and his warlike heart beat high !

"Karna !" so exclaimed Duryodhan, "hero of resistless might,
Thou alone canst serve the Kurus in this dread and dubious fight,

Step forth, Kuru's chief and leader, mount thy sounding battle-car,
Lead the still unconquered Kurus to the trophies of the war !

Matchless was the ancient Bhishma in this famed and warlike land,
But a weakness for Yudhishtir palsied Bhishma's slaying hand,

Matchless too was doughty Drona in the warrior's skill and art,
Kindness for his pupil Arjun lurked within the teacher's heart !

Greater than the ancient grandsire, greater than the Brahman old,
Fiercer in thy deathless hatred, stronger in thy prowess bold,

Peerless Karna, lead us onward to a brighter happier fate,
For thy arm is nerved to action by an unforgotten hate !

Lead us as the martial SKANDA led the conquering gods of old,
Smite the foe as angry INDRA smote the Danavs fierce and bold,

As before the light of morning flies the baleful gloom of night,
Pandavs and the proud Panchalas fly before thy conquering might !"

Priests with hymns and chanted *mantra* and with every sacred rite
Hailed him Leader of the Kurus, chieftain of unconquered might,

Earthen jars they placed around him with the sacred water full,
Elephant's tusk they laid beside him and the horn of mighty bull,

Gem and jewel, corn and produce, by the arméd hero laid,
Silken cloth of finest lustre o'er his crownéd head they spread,

Brahmans poured the holy water, bards his lofty praises sung,
Kshatras, Vaisyas, purer Sudras hailed him Leader bold and strong !

"Vanquish warlike sons of Pritha !" thus the holy Brahmans blessed,
Gold and garments, food and cattle, joyous Karna on them pressed,

And the holy rite concluded, Karna ranged his men in war,
To the dreaded front of battle drove his swift and conquering car !

Morn to noon and noon to evening raged the battle on the plain,
 Countless warriors fought and perished, car-borne chiefs were pierced
 and slain,

Helméd Arjun, crownéd Karna, met at last by will of fate,
 Life-long was their mutual anger, deathless was their mutual hate !

And the firm earth shook and trembled 'neath the furious rush of war,
 And the echoing welkin answered shouts that nations heard afar,

And the thickening cloud of arrows filled the firmament on high,
 Darker, deeper, dread and deadlier, grew the angry face of sky,

Till the evening's sable garment mantled o'er the battle-field,
 And the angry rivals parted, neither chief could win or yield !

II

Fall of Karna

At the break of morning Karna unto Prince Duryodhan went,
 Thus in slow and measured accents to his inner thoughts gave vent :

"Morning dawns, O Kuru's monarch ! mighty Arjun shall be slain,
 Or fulfilling warrior's duty Karna dyes the gory plain !

Long through life within our bosoms ever burnt the mutual hate,
 Oft we met and often parted, rescued by the will of fate,

But yon sun with crimson lustre sees us meet to part no more,
 Gallant Arjun's course this evening or proud Karna's shall be o'er,

Room is none for Arjun's glory and for archer Karna's fame,
 One must sink and one must sparkle with a brighter richer flame !

List yet more ; in wealth of arrows and in wondrous strength of bow,
 Arjun scarcely me surpasseth, scarcely I excel my foe,

In the light skill of the archer and in sight and truth of aim,
 Arjun beats not, scarcely rivals, Karna's proud and peerless fame !

If his wondrous bow *Gandiva* is the gift of gods in heaven,
Karna's bow the famed *Vijaya* is by Par'su-Rama given,

Ay, the son of Jamadagni, kings of earth who proudly slayed,
On the youthful arms of Karna his destructive weapon laid !

Yet I own, O king of Kuru ! Arjun doth his foe excel,—
Matchless are his fiery coursers, peerless Krishna leads them well,

Krishna holds the reins for Arjun, Krishna speeds his battle-car,
Drives the lightning-wingéd coursers o'er the startled field of war,

Sweeps in pride his sounding chariot till it almost seems to fly,
Arjun lords it o'er the battle like the comet in the sky !

Grant me, monarch, mighty Salya drive my swift and warlike steed,
And against the car-borne Arjun, Karna's fiery chariot lead,

Salya too is skilled, like Krishna, with the steed and battle-car,
Equal thus I meet my foeman in this last and fatal war !"

So spoke Duryodhan ; warlike Salya mounted Karna's sounding car,
Karna sought for mighty Arjun in the serried ranks of war :

"Hundred milch-kine Karna offers, costly garment, yellow gold,
Unto him who in this battle points to me my foeman bold,

Cars and steeds and fertile acres, peaceful hamlets rich and fair,
Dark-eyed damsels lotus-bosomed, crowned with glossy raven hair,

These are his who points out Arjun hiding from this fatal war,
Arjun's snowy steeds and banner and his swift and thund'ring car !"

Karna spake, but long and loudly laughed the king of Madra's land,
As he reined the fiery coursers with his strong and skilful hand,

"Of rewards and gifts," he uttered, "little need is there, I ween,
Arjun is not wont to tarry from the battle's glorious scene,

Soon will Arjun's snowy coursers shake the battle's startled field.
Helméd Arjun like a comet gleam with bow and sword and shield !

As the forest-ranging tiger springs upon his fated prey,
As the hornéd bull infuriate doth the weakling cattle slay,

As the fierce and lordly lion smites the timid jungle-deer,
Arjun soon shall smite thee, Karna, for he knows nor dread nor fear,

Save thee then, O mighty archer! while I drive my sounding car,
Pandu's son hath met no equal in the valiant art of war!"

Darkly frowned the angry Karna, Salya held the loosened rein,
Dashing through the hostile forces then the warrior sped amain,

Through the serried ranks of battle Karna drove in furious mood,
Facing him in royal splendour good Yudhishtir fearless stood!

Surging ranks of brave Nishadas closed between and fought in vain,
Proud Panchalas stout and faithful vainly strove among the slain,

Onward came the fiery Karna like the ocean's heaving swell,
With the sweeping wrath of tempest on the good Yudhishtir fell!

Wrathful then the son of Pandu marked his noblest chieftains dead,
And in words of scornful anger thus to archer Karna said:

'Hast thou, Karna, vowed the slaughter of my younger Arjun brave,
Wilt thou do Duryodhan's mandate, proud Duryodhan's willing slave,

Unfulfilled thy vow remaineth, for the righteous gods ordain,
By Yudhishtir's hand thouallest, go and slumber with the slain!"

Fiercely drew his bow Yudhishtir, fiercely was the arrow driven,
Rocky cliff or solid mountain might the shaft have pierced and riven,

Lightning-like it came on Karna, struck and pierced him on the left,
And the warrior fell and fainted as of life and sense bereft!

Soon he rose; the cloud of anger darkened o'er his livid face,
And he drew his godlike weapon with a more than godlike grace,

Arrows keen and dark as midnight gleaming in their lightning flight,
Struck Yudhishtir's royal armour with a fierce resistless might!

Clanking fell the shattered armour from his person fair and pale,
As from sun's meridian splendour clouds are drifted by the gale,

Armourless but bright and radiant brave Yudhishtir waged the fight,
Bright as sky with stars bespangled on a clear and cloudless night,

And he threw his pointed lances like the summer's bursting flood,
Once again Yudhishtir's weapons drank his fiery foeman's blood !

Pale with anguish, wrathful Karna fiercely turned the tide of war,
But Yudhishtir's royal standard, crushed his sumptuous battle-car,

And he urged his gallant coursers till his chariot bounding flew,
And with more than godlike prowess then his famed *Vijaya* drew,

Faint Yudhishtir sorely bleeding waged no more the fatal fight,
Fearless, steadfast, void of armour, sought his safety in his flight !

"Speed, thou timid man of penance !" thus insulting Karna said,
"Famed for virtue not for valour ! blood of thine I will not shed,

Speed and chant thy wonted *mantra*, do the rites that sages know,
But the helméd warrior Arjun came and meet his warlike foe !"

To his tent retired Yudhishtir in his wrath and in his shame,
Spoke to Arjun who from battle to his angry elder came :

"Hast thou yet, O tardy Arjun, base insulting Karna slain,
Karna dealing dire destruction on this battle's reddened plain ?

Like his teacher Par'su-Rama dyes in purple blood his course,
Like a snake of deathful poison Karna guards the Kuru force,

Karna smote my chariot-driver and my standard rent in twain,
Battered car and lifeless horses strew the red inglorious plain,

Farce with life in speechless anguish from the battle-field I fled,
Scorn of foes and shame of kinsmen ! Warrior's fame and honour dead !

Ten long years and three Yudhishtir joy nor peace nor rest hath seen,
And while Karna lives and glories all our insults still are green,

Hast thou, Arjun, slain that chieftain as in swelling pride he stood,
Hast thou wiped our wrongs and insults in that chariot-driver's blood?

"At a distance," Krishna answered, "fiery Arjun fought his way,
Now he seeks the archer Karna and he vows his death to-day."

Anger lit Yudhishtir's forehead and a tremor shook his frame,
As he spake to silent Arjun words of insult and of shame :

"Wherefore like a painted warrior doth the helméd Arjun stand,
Wherefore useless lies *Gandiva* in his weak and nerveless hand,

Wherefore hangs yon mighty sabre from his belt of silk and gold,
Wherefore doth the peerless Krishna drive his coursers fleet and bold,

If afar from war's arena timid Arjun seeks to hide,
If he shuns the mighty Karna battling in unconquered pride ?

Arjun ! yield thy famed *Gandiva* unto worthier hands than thine,
On some braver truer warrior let thy mighty standard shine,

Yield thy helmet and thy armour, yield thy gleaming sword and shield,
Hide thee from this deathful battle, matchless Karna rules the field !"

Sparkled Arjun's eye in anger with a red and livid flame,
And the tempest of his passion shook his more than mortal frame,

Heedless, on the sword-bilt Arjun placed his swift and trembling hand,
Heedless, with a warrior's instinct drew the dark and glistening brand :

Sacred blood of king and elder would have stained his trenchant steel,
But the wise and noble Krishna strove the fatal feud to heal :

"Not before thy elder, Arjun, but in yonder purple field,
'Gainst thy rival and thy foeman use thy warlike sword and shield,

Render honour to thy elder, quench thy hasty impious wrath,
Render faith to holy *sastra*, leave not virtue's sacred path,

Low before thy virtuous elder as before the gods in heaven,
Sheathe thy sword and quell thy passion, be thy hasty sin forgiven !"

Pious Arjun silent listened and obeyed the mandate high,
Tears of manly sorrow trickled from his soft and altered eye,

Dear in joy and dear in suffering, calm his righteous elder stood,
Dear in Indra-prastha's mansions, dearer in the jungle wood !

Arjun sheathed his flashing sabre, joined his hands and hung his head,
Fixed his eye on good Yudhishtir and in humble accents said :

Pardon, great and saintly monarch, vassal's disrespectful word,
Pardon, elder, if a younger heedless drew his sinful sword,

Not thy hest to yield my weapon stung my soul to bitter strife,
Dearer is the bow *Gandiva* unto Arjun than his life,

Pardon if the blood of anger mantled o'er this rugged brow,
Pardon if I drew my sabre 'gainst my duty and my vow,

For that hasty act repenting Arjun bows thy heart to move,
Grant me, holy king and elder, monarch's grace and brother's love !"

From Yudhishtir's altered eyelids did the tears of sorrow start,
And he raised his younger brother to his ever-loving heart :

Arjun, I have wronged thee brother, and no fault or sin is thine,
Hasty words of thoughtless anger 'scaped these sinful lips of mine,

After was my shame and anguish when from Karna's car I fled,
Dearer than my bleeding bosom warrior's fame and honour bled,

Hasty words I uttered, Arjun, by my pain and anguish driven,
Pardon them with a brother's kindness, be thy elder's sin forgiven !"

Longer by his elder's blessing Arjun mounted then his car,
Drona drove the milk white coursers to the thickening rank of war !

Onward came the fiery Karna with his chiefs and armed men,
Salya urged his flying coursers with the whip and loosened rein,

Often met and often parted, life-long rivals in their fame,
Not to part again the heroes each before the other came,

Not to part until a chieftain by the other chief was slain,
Arjun dead or lifeless Karna pressed the Kuru-kshetra plain !

Long they strove, but neither archer could his gallant foeman beat,
Though like surging ocean billows did the angry warriors meet,

Arjun's arrows fell on Karna like the summer's angry flood,
Karna's shafts like hissing serpents drank the valiant Arjun's blood,

Fierce and quick from his *Gandiva* angry accents Arjun woke,
Till the bow-string strained and heated was by sudden impulse broke !

"Hold," cried Arjun to his rival, "mind the honoured rules of war,
Warriors strike not helpless foemen thus disabled on the car,

Hold, brave Karna, until Arjun mends his over-strained bow,
Arjun then will crave for mercy nor from god nor mortal foe !"

Vain he spake, for wild with anger heedless Karna fiercely lowered,
Thick and fast on bowless Arjun countless arrows darkly showered,

Like the cobra dark and hissing fell each lurid lightning dart,
Struck the helpless archer Arjun on his broad and bleeding heart !

Furious like a wounded tiger quivering in the darksome wood,
With his mended warlike weapon now the angry Arjun stood,

Blazing with a mighty radiance like a flame in summer night,
Fierce he fell on archer Karna with his more than mortal might !

Little recked the dauntless Karna if his foe in anger rose,
Karna feared not face of mortal, dreaded not immortal foes,

Nor with all his might and valour Arjun conquered him in war,
Till within the soft earth sinking stuck the wheel of Karna's car !

and unmoved the tilted chariot, vainly wrathful Salya strove,
 trying still the struggling coursers Karna's heavy car to move,

vainly too the gallant Karna leaped upon the humid soil,
 ought to lift the sunken axle with a hard unwonted toil,

"Hold," he cried to noble Arjun, "wage no false and impious war
 on a foeman, helpless, careless, —thou upon thy lofty car."

Smiling laughed the helmeted Arjun, answer nor rejoinder gave,
 words of righteous admonition Krishna uttered calm and brave :

"Dost thou seek the path of virtue, mighty chief and archer bold,
 when Sakuni robbed Yudhishtir of his empire and his gold,

dost thou tread the path of honour on Yudhishtir's fatal fall,
 heaping insults on Draupadi in Hastina's council hall ?

dost thou then fulfil thy duty when, Yudhishtir's exile crost,
 Krishna asked in right and justice for Yudhishtir's empire lost,

dost thou fight a holy battle when with six marauders skilled,
 Krishna hunted Abhimanyu and the youthful hero killed ?

"Speak not then of rules of honour, blackened in your sins you die,
 death is come in shape of Arjun, Karna's fatal hour is nigh !"

Coming to fury and to madness, faint but frantic Karna fought,
 reckless, ruthless, and relentless, valiant Arjun's life he sought,

At his last resistless arrow, on his foeman's mighty chest,
 Arjun felt a shock of thunder on his broad and mailed breast !

Struggling fell the bleeding Arjun, darkness dimmed his manly eye,
 He and breathless watched his warriors, anxious watched the gods in sky.

When it passed ; and helmeted Arjun rose like newly lighted fire,
 Abhimanyu's sad remembrance kindled fresh a father's ire !

And he drew his bow *Gandiva*, aimed his dart with stifled breath,
Vengeance for his murdered hero winged the fatal dart of death,

Like the fiery bolt of lightning Arjun's lurid arrow sped,
Like a rock by thunder riven Karna fell among the dead !

III

Fall of Salya

Darkly closed the shades of midnight, Karna still and lifeless lay,
Ghast and pale o'er slaughtered thousands fell the morning's sickly ray,

Nowman brave and prond preceptor Kripa to Duryodhan said,
Tear bedimmed the warrior's eyelids and his manly bosom bled :

"Leaderless are Kuru's forces by a dire misfortune crost;
Like the moonless shades of midnight in their utter darkness lost;

Like a summer-dried river, weary waste of arid sand,
Lost its pride of fresh'ning waters sweeping o'er the grateful land !

As a spark of fire consumeth summer's parched and sapless wood,
Kuru's lordless lifeless forces shall be angry Arjun's food;

Bhima too shall seek fulfilment of the dreadful vow he made,
Brave Satyaki wreak his vengeance for his sons untimely slayed !

Bid this battle cease, Duryodhan; pale and fitful is thy star,
Blood enough of friendly nations soaks this crimson field of war,

Bid them live,—the few survivors of a vast and countless host,
Let thy few remaining brothers live,—for many ate the lost,

Kindly heart hath good Yudhishtir, still he seeks for rightful peace,
Render back his ancient kingdom, bid this war of mismen cease !"

Kripa," so Duryodhan answered, "in this sad and fatal strife,
 ever foremost of our warriors, ever careless of thy life,

ever in the council chamber thou hast words of wisdom said,
 endless war and dire destruction by thy peaceful counsel stayed,

every word thou speakest, Kripa, is a word of truth and weight,
 worthless thy advice for concord, wise preceptor, comes too late !

Hope not that the good Yudhishtir will again our friendship own,
 created once by deep Sakuni of his kingdom and his throne,

Anged Bhima will not palter, fatal is the vow he made,
 Ungrateful Arjan will not pardon gallant Abhimanyu dead !

Let Draupadi doth her penance, so our ancient matrons say,
 Let our blood to wash her insult and her proud insulters slay,

Let Subhadra morn and evening weeps her dear departed son,
 Let her Draupadi's deathless anger for the hero dead and gone,

Let them reply in their bosoms rankle wrongs and insults we have given,
 Let God alone can wash it, Kripa, such the cruel will of Heaven !

Let the hour for peace be over, for our best sleep on the plain,
 Let others, kinsmen, friends and elders slumber with the countless slain,

Let all Duryodhan like a recreant now avoid the deathful strife,
 Let all his bravest warriors have in war surrendered life,

Let all he, sending them to slaughter, now survive and learn to flee,
 Let all he, ruler over monarchs, learn to bend the servile knee ?

Let Duryodhan sue no favour even with his dying breath,
 Let subdued and still unconquered, changeless even unto death,

Let a valiant king of Madra lead our armed hosts to-day,
 Let to perish or to conquer, gallant Kripa, lead the way !"

Meanwhile round the brave Yudhishtir calmly stood the Pandav force,
As the final day of battle now began its fatal course,

"Brothers, kinsmen, hero-warriors," so the good Yudhishtir said,
"Ye have done your share in battle, witness countless foemen dead,

Sad Yudhishtir is your eldest, let him end this fatal strife,
Slay the last of Kuru chieftains or surrender throne and life !

Bold Satyaki ever faithful with his arms protects my right,
Drupad's son with watchful valour guards my left with wonted might,

In the front doth Bhima battle, careful Arjun guards the rear,
I will lead the battle's centre which shall know nor flight nor fear ! "

Truly on that fatal morning brave Yudhishtir kept his word,
Long and fiercely waged the combat with fair Madra's valiant lord,

Thick and fast the arrows whistled and the lances pointed well,
Till with crashing sound of thunder Salya's mighty standard fell !

Rescued by the son of Drona, Salya rushed again to war,
Slew the noble milk-white coursers of Yudhishtir's royal car,

And as springs the hungry lion on the spotted jungle-deer,
Salya rushed upon Yudhishtir reckless and unknown to fear !

Brave Yudhishtir marked him coming and he hurled his fatal dart,
Like the fatal curse of Brahman sank the weapon in his heart,

Blood suffused his eye and nostril, quivered still his feeble hand,
Like a cliff by thunder riven Salya fell and shook the land !

Ended was the fatal battle, for the *Mlechcha* king was slain,
Pierced by angry Sahadeva false Sakuni pressed the plain,

All the brothers of Duryodhan tiger-waisted Bhima slew,
Proud Duryodhan pale and panting from the field of battle flew !

IV

Night of Slaughter : Duryodhan's Death

er from battle's toil and slaughter, by a dark and limpid lake,
d and slow and faint Duryodhan did his humble shelter take,

at the valiant sons of Pandu with the hunter's watchful care,
either tracked their fallen foeman like a wild beast in its lair !

ods be witness," said Duryodhan, flaming in his shame and wrath,
oy to manhood ever hating we have crossed each other's path,

ow we meet to part no longer, proud Duryodhan fights you all,
rish he, or sons of Pandu, may this evening see your fall ! "

ima answered : "For the insults long endured but not forgiven,
: alone you fight, Duryodhan, witness righteous gods in heaven,

ll to mind the dark destruction planned of old in fiendish ire,
the halls of Varnavata to consume us in the fire,

ll to mind the scheme deceitful, deep Sakuni's dark device,
eating us of fame and empire by the trick of loaded dice,

ll to mind that coward insult and the outrage foul and keen,
ing on Drupad's saintly daughter and our noble spotless queen,

ll to mind the stainless Bhishma for thy sins and folly slain,
eless proud preceptor Drona, Karna lifeless on the plain,

ish in thy sins, Duryodhan, perish too thy hated name,
d thy dark life crime-polluted ends, Duryodhan, in thy shame ! "

e two bulls that fight in fury blind with wounds and oozing blood,
e two wild and warring tuskers shaking all the echoing wood,

e the thunder-wielding INDRA, YAMA monarch of the dead,
ntless Bhima and Duryodhan fiercely strove and fought and bled !

Sparks of fire shot from their maces and their faces ran with blood,
Neither won and neither yielded, matched in strength the rivals stood,

Till his vow remembered Bhima, and he raised his weapon high,
With a foul attack but fatal broke Duryodhan's shattered knee !

Through the sky a voice resounded as the great Duryodhan fell,
And the earth the voice re-echoed o'er her distant hill and dale,

Beasts and birds in consternation flew o'er land and azure sky,
Men below and heavenly *Siddhas* trembled at the fatal cry !

Darkness fell upon the battle, proud Duryodhan dying lay,
But the slaughterer of the combat closed not with the closing day,

Ancient feud and hatred linger after battle's sweeping flood,
And the father's deathless anger courseth in the children's blood,

Drona slept and gallant Drupad, for their earthly task was done,
Vengeance fired the son of Drona 'gainst the royal Drupad's son !

Sable shadows of the midnight fell o'er battle's silent plain,
Faintly shone the fitful planets on the dying and the slain,

And the vengeful son of Drona fired by omens dark and dread,
Stole into the tents of foemen with a soft and noiseless tread !

Dhrista-dyumna and Sikhandin, princes of Panchala's land,
Fell beneath the proud avenger Aswa-thaman's reeking hand,

Ay, where Drupad's sleeping grandsons, fair Draupadi's children lay,
Stole the cruel arm of vengeance, smothered them ere dawn of day !

Done the ghastly work of slaughter, Aswa-thaman bent his way
Where beside the limpid waters lone Duryodhan dying lay,

And Duryodhan blessed the hero with his feeble fleeting breath,
Joy of vengeance cheered his bosom and he died a happy death !

BOOK XI

S R A D D H A

(Funeral Rites)

THE death of Duryodhan concludes the war, and it is followed by the lament of women and the funerals of the deceased warriors. The passages translated in this Book form Section x., portions of Sections xvi., xvii., and xxvi., and the whole of Section xxvii. of Book xi. of the original text.

I

Kuru Women visit the Battle-field

Take the ancient Dhritā-rashtra, father of a hundred sons,
Whom now and sorrow-stricken, dark his ebbing life-tide runs :

Gods fulfil my life's last wishes ! Henchmen, yoke my royal car,
Dhritā-rashtra meets his princes in the silent field of war,

Lead unto the Queen Gandhārī, to the dames of Kuru's house,
To each dear departed warrior wends his fair and faithful spouse."

Queen Gandhārī sorrow-laden with the ancient Prithā came,
And each weeping widowed princess and each wailing childless dame,

And they saw the hoary monarch, father of a perished race,
Restless and loud awoke their sorrow, welling tears suffused their face,

Good Vidura ever gentle whispered comfort unto all,
And the dames within their chariots, left Hastinā's palace hall.

Loud the wail of woe and sorrow rose from every Kuru house,
Children wept beside their mothers for each widowed royal spouse,

Veiled dwellers of the palace, scarce the gods their face had seen,
Heedless now through mart and city sped each widowed childless queen,

From their royal brow and bosom gem and jewel cast aside,
Loose their robes and flowing tresses, quenched in grief their queenly pride,

So when falls the antlered monarch, struck by woe and sudden fear
Issuing from the wooded mountains listless stray the dappled deer,

So when smit by sudden panic, milk-white coursers scour the plain,
Wildly toss their flowing tresses, shake their soft and glossy mane !

Clinging to her weeping sister wept each dame in cureless pain,
For the lord the son or father in the deathful battle slain,

Wept and smote her throbbing bosom and in bitter anguish wailed,
Till her senses reeled in sorrow, till her woman's reason failed.

Veiled queens and bashful maidens, erst they shunned the public eye,
Blush nor shame suffused their faces as they passed the city by,

Gentle-bosomed, kindly hearted, erst they wiped each other's tear,
Now by common sorrow laden knew no sister's words of cheer.

With this troop of wailing women, deep in woe, disconsolate,
Slow the monarch of the Kurus passed Hastina's outer gate,

Men from stall and loom and anvil, men of every guild and trade,
Left the city with the monarch, through the open country strayed,

And a universal sorrow filled the air and answering sky,
As when ends the mortal's *Yuga* and the end of world is nigh ?

II

Gandhari's Lament for the Slain

Stainless Queen and stainless woman, ever righteous ever good,
Stately in her mighty sorrow on the field Gandhari stood !

Strewn with skulls and clotted tresses, darkened by the stream of gore,
With the limbs of countless warriors was the red field covered o'er,

Elephants and steeds of battle, car-borne chiefs untimely slain,
Headless trunks and heads dissevered filled the red and ghastly plain,

With the long-drawn howl of jackals did the scene of carnage ring,
And the vulture and the raven shook their dark and loathsome wing,

Feasting on the blood of warriors foul *Pisachas* filled the air,
Viewless forms of hungry *Rakshas* did the mangled corpses tear !

Through this scene of death and carnage was the ancient monarch led,
Kuru dames with faltering footsteps stepped amidst the countless dead,

And a piercing wail of anguish burst upon the echoing plain,
As they saw their sons or fathers, lords or brothers, midst the slain,

As they saw the wolves of jungle feed upon the destined prey,
Darksome wanderers of the midnight prowling in the light of day !

shriek of pain and wail of anguish did the ghastly field resound,
And their feeble footsteps faltered and they sank upon the ground,

Sense and reason left the mourners as they fainted in their grief,
Death-like swoon succeeding sorrow yielded but a short relief !

Then a mighty sigh of anguish from Gandhari's bosom broke,
Gazing on her anguished daughters unto Krishna thus she spoke :

"Mark my sorrow-stricken daughters, widowed queens of Kurn's house,
Wailing for their dear departed, like the osprey for her spouse !

How each cold and fading feature wakes in them a woman's love,
How amidst the lifeless warriors still with restless steps they rove,

Mothers hug their slaughtered children all unconscious in their sleep
Widows bend upon their husbands and in ceaseless sorrow weep,

Mighty Bhishma, hath he fallen, quenched is archer Karna's pride,
Doth the monarch of Panchala sleep by foeman Drona's side ?

Shining mail and costly jewels, royal bangles strew the plain,
Golden garlands rich and burnished deck the chiefs untimely slain,

Lances hurled by stalwart fighters, clubs of mighty wrestlers killed,
Swords and bows of ample measure, quivers still with arrows filled !

Mark the unforgotten warriors, jungle prowlers 'mid them stray,
On their brow and mailed bosoms heedless perch the birds of prey,

Mark the great unconquered heroes famed on earth from west to east,
Kankas perch upon their foreheads, hungry wolves upon them feast !

Mark the kings, on softest cushion scarce the needed rest they found,
Now they lie in peaceful slumber on the hard and reddened ground,

Mark the youths who morn and evening listed to the minstrel's song,
In their ear the loathsome jackal doth his doleful wail prolong !

See the chieftains with their maces and their swords of trusty steel,
Still they grasp their tried weapons, — do they still the life-pulse feel ? "

III

Gandhari's Lament for Duryodhan

Thus to Krishna, Queen Gandhari strove her woeful thoughts to tell,
When, alas, her wandering vision on her son Duryodhan fell,

Sudden anguish smote her bosom and her senses seemed to stray,
Like a tree by tempest shaken senseless on the earth she lay !

Once again she waked in sorrow, once again she cast her eye,
Where her son in blood empurpled slept beneath the open sky,

And she clasped her dear Duryodhan, held him close unto her breast,
Toss convulsive shook her bosom as the lifeless form she prest,

And her tears like rains of summer fell and washed his noble head,
Decked with garlands still untarnished, graced with *nishkas* bright and red

'Mother' said my dear Duryodhan when he went unto the war,
'Wish me joy and wish me triumph as I mount the battle-car,'

Son' I said to dear Duryodhan, 'Heaven avert a cruel fate,
Yato dharma stato jayah ! Triumph doth on Virtue wait !'

But he set his heart on battle, by his valour wiped his sins,
Now he dwells in realms celestial which the faithful warrior wins,

And I weep not for Duryodhan, like a prince he fought and fell,
But my sorrow-stricken husband, who can his misfortunes tell ?

Ah, my son was brave and princely, all resistless in the war,
Now he sleeps the sleep of warriors, sunk in gloom his radiant star,

And my son mid crowned monarchs held the first and foremost sway,
Now he rests upon the red earth, quenched in gloom his glory's ray,

Aye my son the best of heroes, he hath won the warrior's sky,
Kshatras nobly conquer, Krishna, when in war they nobly die !

Hark the loathsome cry of jackals, how the wolves their vigils keep,
Maidens rich in song and beauty erst were wont to watch his sleep,

Hark the foul and blood-beaked vultures flap their wings upon the dead,
Maidens waved their feathery *pankhas* round Duryodhan's royal bed,

Peerless bowman ! mighty monarch ! nations still his hests obeyed,
As a lion slays a tiger, Bhima hath Duryodhan slayed !

Thirteen years o'er Kuru's empire proud Duryodhan held his sway,
Ruled Hastina's ancient city where fair Ganga's waters stray,

I have seen his regal splendour with these ancient eyes of mine,
Elephants and battle-chariots, steeds of war and herds of kine,

Kuru owns another master and Duryodhan's day is fled,
And I live to be a witness ! Krishna, O that I were dead !

Mark Duryodhan's noble widow, Lakshman's mother true and bold,
Queenly in her youth and beauty, like an altar of bright gold,

Torn from husband's sweet embraces, from her son's entwining arms,
Doomed to life-long woe and anguish in her youth and in her charms,

Rend my hard and stony bosom crushed beneath this cruel pain,
Should Gandhari live to witness noble son and grandson slain ?

Mark Duryodhan's gentle widow, how she hugs his gory head,
How with gentle hands and tender softly holds him on his bed,

How from dear departed husband turns she to her dearer son,
And the tear-drops of the mother choke the widow's bitter groan,

Like the fibre of the lotus tender-golden is her frame,
O my lotus ! O my daughter ! Bharat's pride and Kurus fame !

If the truth resides in *Vedas*, brave Duryodhan dwells above,
Wherefore linger we in sadness severed from his cherished love, —

If the truth resides in *Sastra*, dwells in sky my hero son,
Wherefore linger we in sorrow since their earthly task is done ? ”

IV

Funeral Rite

Victor of a deathful battle, sad Yudhishtir viewed the plain,
Friends and kinsmen, kings and chieftains, countless troops untimely slain

And he spake to wise Sudharman pious priest of Kuru's race,
Unto Sanjay, and to Dhaumya, to Vidura full of grace,

Take unto the brave Vuyutsu, Kuru's last surviving chief,
Take to faithful Indrasena and to warriors sunk in grief :

Pious rites are due to foemen and to friends and kinsmen slain,
None shall lack a fitting funeral, none shall perish on the plain."

Use Vidura and his comrades sped on sacred duty bound,
Sandalwood and scented aloes, fragrant oil and perfumes found,

Like robes of costly splendour, fabrics by the artist wove,
Dry wood from the thorny jungle, perfume from the scented grove,

And the cars and splintered lances, hewed and ready for the fire,
Filed and ranged in perfect order formed the warriors' funeral pyre.

Kings and princes, noble chieftains, were in rank and order laid,
And with streams of fragrant *ghrita* was the rich libation made,

Blazed the fire with wondrous radiance by the rich libation fed,
Sanctifying and consuming mortal remnants of the dead.

Save Duryodhan and his brothers, Salva of the mighty car,
Bhisravas king of nations, Jayadratha famed in war,

Bhimanyu son of Arjun, Lakshman proud Duryodhan's son,
Samadatta and the Srinjays famed for deeds of valour done,

Satsya's monarch proud Virata, Drupad fair Panchala's king,
And his sons, Panchala's princes, whose great deeds the minstrels sing,

Cultured monarch of Kosala, and Gandhara's wily lord,
Arjuna proud and peerless archer, matchless with his flaming sword,

Samadatta eastern monarch who on mighty tusker came,
Matotkacha son of Bhima, Alambusha rich in fame,

And a hundred other monarchs all received the pious rite,
Till the radiance of the fire-light chased the shadows of the night.

Ati-medha due to fathers was performed with pious care,
Suns and wails and lamentations mingled in the midnight air,

Sacred songs of *rik* and *saman* rose with women's piercing wail,
And the creatures of the wide earth heard the sound subdued and pale,

Smokeless and with radiant lustre shone each red and lighted pyre,
Like the planets of the bright sky throbbing with celestial fire !

Men in nations, countless, nameless, from each court and camp afar,
From the east and west collected, fell in Kuru-Kshetra's war,

Thousand fires for them were lighted, they received the pious rite,
Such was good Yudhishtir's mandate, such was wise Vidura's might,

All the dead were burned to ashes and the sacred rite was o'er,
Dhrita-rashtra and Yudhishtir slowly walked to Ganga's shore.

V

Oblation to Karna

Sacred Ganga, ample-bosomed, sweeps along in regal pride,
Rolling down her limpid waters through high banks on either side,

Childless dames and weeping widows thither in their anguish came,
Due and holy rites to render to departed chiefs of fame.

And they cast their jewelled girdles, gems and scarfs belaced with gold,
Gave oblations of the water unto warriors true and bold,

Unto fathers, unto husbands, unto sons in battle slayed,
Offerings of the sacred water sorrowing wives and mothers made.

And so great the host of mourners wending to perform the rite,
That their footsteps made a pathway in the sad and sacred site,

And the shelving banks of Ganga peopled by the sorrowing train,
Wide-expanding, vast and sea-like, formed a scene of woe and pain !

But a wave of keener sorrow swept o'er Pritha's heaving breast,
As unto her weeping children thus her secret she expressed :

"He, my sots, the peerless bowman, mighty in his battle-car,
Who by will of fate untimely Was by Arjun slain in war,

He whom as the son of Radha, chariot-driver ye have thought,
But who shone with SURYA'S lustre as his countless foes he fought,

He who faced your stoutest Warriors and in battle never failed,
Bravely led the Kuru forces and in danger never quailed,

He who knew no peer in prowess, owned in War no haughtier name,
Yielded life but not his honour and by death hath conquered fame,

He in truth who never faltered, never left his bow undone,
Offer unto him oblation, Karna was my eldest son !

Karna was your honoured elder and the Sun inspired his birth.
Karna in his rings and armour Sun-like trod the spacious earth ! "

Pritha spake ; the Pandav brothers groaned in penitence and pain,
And they wept in woe and anguish for the brother they had slain,

Hissing forth his sigh of anguish like a crushed and wounded snake,
Said Yudhishtir to his mother thus his inward feelings spake :

"Didst thou, mother, bear the hero fathomless like ocean dread,
Whose unfauling glistening arrows like its countless billows sped,

Didst thou bear that peerless archer all-resistless in his car,
Sweeping with the roar of ocean through the stratteted tanks of war ?

Didst thou hide the mighty warrior, mortal man of heavenly birth,
Crushing 'neath his arm of valour all his fomen on the earth,

Didst thou hide the birth and lineage of that chief of deathful ire,
As a man in folds of garments seeks to hide the flaming fire ?

Arjun wielder of *Gandiva* was for us no truer stay
None was Karna for the Kurus in the battle's dread array,

Monarchs matched not Karna's glory nor his deeds of valour done,
Didst the mighty car-borne warriors mightiest warrior Karna shone !

Woe to us ! our eldest brother we have in the battle slain,
And our nearest dearest elder fell upon the gory plain,

Not the death of Abhimanyu from the fair Subhadra torn,
Not the slaughter of the princes by the proud Draupadi borne,

Not the fall of friends and kinsmen and Panchala's mighty host,
Like thy death afflicts my bosom, noble Karna loved and lost !

Monarch's empire, victor's glory, all the treasures earth can yield,
Righteous bliss and holy gladness, harvest of the heavenly field,

All that wish can shape and utter, all that nourish hope and pride,
All were ours, O noble Karna, hadst thou rested by our side,

And this carnage of the Kurus these sad eyes had never seen,
Peace had graced our blessed empire, happy would the earth have been !"

Long bewailed the sad Yudhishtir for his elder loved and dead,
And oblation of the water to the noble Karna made,

And the royal dames of Kuru viewed the sight with freshening pain,
Wept to see the good Yudhishtir offering to his brother slain,

And the widowed queen of Karna with the women of his house
Gave oblations to her hero, wept her loved and slaughtered spouse.

Done the rites to the departed, done oblations to the dead,
Slowly then the sad survivors on the river's margin spread,

Far along the shore and sandbank of the sacred sealike stream
Maid and matron laved their bodies 'neath the morning's holy beam,

And ablutions done, the mourners did in silent woe depart,
Bent their way to far Hastina, and a void was in their heart.

BOOK XII.

ASWA-MEDHA.

(Sacrifice of the Horse.)

THE real Epic ends with the war and the funerals of the deceased warriors. Much of what follows in the original Sanscrit poem is either episodical, or comparatively recent interpolation. The great and venerable warrior Bhishma, still lying on his death-bed, discourses for the instruction of the newly crowned Yudhishtir on various subjects like the Duties of Kings, the Duties of the Four Castes, and the Four Stages of Life. He repeats the discourses of other saints, of Bhrigu and Bharadwaja, of Manu and Brihaspati, of Vyasa and Suka, of Yajnavalkya and Janaka, of Narada and Narayana. He explains *Sankya* philosophy and *Yoga* philosophy, and lays down the laws of Marriage, the laws of Succession, the rules of Gifts, and the rules of Funeral Rites. He preaches the cult of Krishna, and narrates endless legends, tales, traditions, and myths about sages and saints, gods and mortal kings. All this is told in two Books containing about twenty-two thousand couplets, and forming nearly one-fourth of the entire Sanscrit Epic!

The reason of adding all this episodical and comparatively recent matter to the ancient Epic is not far to seek. The Epic became more popular with the nation at large than dry codes of law and philosophy, and generations of Brahmanical writers laboured therefore to insert in the Epic itself their rules of caste and moral conduct, their laws and philosophy. There is no more venerable character in the Epic than Bhishma, and these rules and laws have therefore been supposed to come from his lips on the solemn occasion of his death. As a storehouse of Hindu laws and traditions and moral rules these episodes are invaluable; but they form no part of the real Epic, they are not a portion of the leading story of the Epic, and we pass them by.

Bhishma dies and is cremated ; but the endless exposition of laws, legends, and moral rules is not yet over. Krishna himself takes up the task in a new Book, and, as he has done once before in the *Bhagavat-gita*, he now once more explains to Arjun in the *Anu-gita* the great truths about Soul and Emancipation, Creation and the Wheel of Life, True Knowledge and Rites and Penance. The adventures of the sage Utanka, whom Krishna meets, then take up a good many pages. All this forms no part of the real Epic, and we pass it by.

Yudhishtir has in the meantime been crowned king of the Kurus at Hastinapura, and a posthumous child of Abhimanyu is named Parikshit, and is destined to succeed to the throne of the Kurus. But Yudhishtir's mind is still troubled with the thoughts of the carnage of the war of which he considers himself guilty, and the great saint Vyasa advises the performance of the *Aswamedha*, or the Sacrifice of the Horse, for the expiration of the sin.

The Sacrifice of the Horse was an ancient Hindu custom practised by kings exercising suzerain powers over surrounding kings. A horse was let free, and was allowed to wander from place to place, accompanied by the king's guard. If any neighbouring king ventured to detain the animal, it was a signal for war. If no king ventured to restrain the wanderer, it was considered a tacit mark of submission to the owner of the animal. And when the horse returned from its peregrinations, it was sacrificed with great pomp and splendour at a feast to which all neighbouring kings were invited.

Yudhishtir allowed the sacrificial horse to wander at will, and Arjun accompanied it. Wherever the horse was stopped, Arjun fought and conquered, and thus proclaimed the supremacy of Yudhishtir over all neighbouring potentates. After various wars and adventures in various regions, Arjun at last returned victorious with the steed to Hastinapura, and the sacrifice commenced.

The description of the sacrifice is somewhat artificial, and concerns itself with rites and ceremonious details and gifts to Brahmans, and altogether bears unmistakable evidence of the interpolating hand of later priestly writers. Nevertheless we cannot exclude from this

translation of the leading incidents of the Epic the last great and crowning act of Yudhishtir, now anointed monarch of Kuruland.

The portion translated in this Book forms Sections lxxxv. and parts of Sections lxxxviii. and lxxxix. of Book xiv. of the original text.

I

The Gathering

Victor of a hundred battles, Arjun bent his homeward way,
Following still the sacred charger free to wander as it may,

Strolling minstrels to Yudhishtir spake of the returning steed,
Spake of Arjun wending homeward with the victor's crown of meed,

And they sang of Arjun's triumphs in Gandhara's distant vale,
On the banks of Brahmaputra and in Sindhu's rocky dale.

Twelfth the day of *Magha's* bright moon, and auspicious was the star,
Nigher came the victor Arjun from his conquests near and far,

Good Yudhishtir called his brothers, faithful twins and Bhima true,
Spake to them in gentle accents, and his words were grave and few :

"Bhima ! Now returneth Arjun with the steed from many a fray,
So they tell me, noble brother, who have met him on the way,

And the time of *Aswa-medha* day by day is drawing nigh,
Magha's full moon is approaching, and the winter passeth by,

Let the Brahmans versed in Vedas choose the sacrificial site,
For the feast of many nations, for the *Aswa-medha* rite."

Bhima heard of Arjun's coming,—hero with the curly hair,—
And to do Yudhishtir's mandate did with gladsome heart repair,

Brahmans versed in sacrifices, cunning architects of fame,
Builders of each various altar with the son of Pritha came,

And upon a level greensward measured forth the sacred site,
Laid it out with halls and pathways for the sacrificial rite.

Mansions graced with gem and jewel round the bright arena shone,
Palaces of golden lustre glinted in the morning sun,

Gilt and blazoned with devices lofty columns stood around,
Graceful arches gold-surmounted spanned the consecrated ground.

Gay pavilions rose in beauty round the sacrificial site,
For the queens of crowned monarchs wending to the holy rite,

Humbler dwellings rose from Brahmans, priests of learning and of fame,
Come to view Yudhishtir's *Yajna* and to bless Yudhishtir's name.

Messengers with kindly greetings went to monarchs far-renowned,
Asked them to Hastina's city, to the consecrated ground,

And to please the great Yudhishtir came each king and chieftain bold,
With their slaves and dark-eyed damsels, arms and horses gems and gold

Came and found a royal welcome in pavilions rich and high,
And the sealike voice of nations smote the echoing vault of sky !

With his greetings did Yudhishtir, for each chief and king of men,
Cooling drinks and sumptuous viands, beds of regal pride ordain,

Stables filled with corn and barley and with milk and luscious cane,
Greeted tall and warlike tuskers, fiery steeds with flowing mane.

Munis from their hermitages to the sacred *Yajna* came,
Rishis from the grove and forest lisping BRAHMA'S holy name,

Famed *Acharyas* versed in Vedas to the city held their way,
Brahmacharins with grass-gridle, chanting sweet the *Saman* lay,

Welcomed Kuru's pious monarch saint and sage and man of grace,
And with gentle condescension showed each priest his fitting place.

Skilled mechanics, cunning artists, raised the structures for the rite,
And with every needful object graced the sacrificial site,

Every duty thus completed, joyful was Yudhishthir's mind,
And he blessed his faithful brothers with an elder's blessings kind.

II

The Feasting

Men in nations are assembled, hymns are sung by saint and sage,
And in learned disputations keen disputants oft engage,

And the concourse of the monarchs view the splendour of the rite,
Like the glorious sky of INDRA is the sacrificial site !

Bright festoons and flaming streamers are on golden arches hung,
Groups of men and gay-dressed women form a bright and joyous throng,

Jars of cool and sparkling waters, vessels rich with gold inlaid,
Costly cups and golden vases are in order due arrayed.

Sacrificial stakes of timber with their golden fastening graced,
Consecrated by the *Mantra* are in sumptuous order placed,

Countless creatures of the wide earth, fishes from the lake and flood,
Buffaloes and bulls from pasture, beasts of prey from jungle wood,

Birds and every egg-horn creature, insects that from moisture spring,
Denizens of cave and mountain for the sacrifice they bring.

Crested chiefs and crowned monarchs gaze in wonder on the site,
Filled with every living object, corn and cattle for the rite,

Curd and cake and sweet confection are for feasting Brahmans spread,
And a hundred thousand people are with sumptuous viands fed !

With the accents of the rain-cloud drum and trumpet raise their voice,
 Speak Yudhishtir's noble bounty, bid the sons of men rejoice,

Day by day the holy *Yajna* grows in splendour and in joy,
 Rice in hillocks feeds all comers, maid and matron, man and boy,

Lakes of curd and lakes of butter speak Yudhishtir's bounteous feast,
 Nations of the Jumbu-dwipa share it, greatest and the least !

For a hundred diverse races from a hundred regions came,
 Ate of good Yudhishtir's bounty, sang of good Yudhishtir's fame,

And a thousand proud attendants, gay with errings, garland-graced,
 Carried food unto the feeders and the sweet confections placed,

Viands fit for crownéd monarchs were unto the Brahmans given,
 Drinks of rich and cooling fragrance like the nectar-drink of heaven !

III

Sacrifice of Animals

Victor of a hundred battles, Arjun came with conquering steed,
 Vyasa herald of the Vedas bade the holy rite proceed :

"For the day is come, Yudhishtir, let the sacrifice be done,
 Let the priests repeat the *Mantra* golden as the morning sun,

Threefold bounteous be thy presents and a threefold merit gain,
 For thy wealth of gold is ample, be thy gifts like summer's rain,

May the threefold rich performance purify the darkening stain,
 Blood of warriors and of kinsmen slaughtered on the gory plain,

May the *Yajna's* pure ablution wash thee of the cruel sin,
 And the meed of sacrificers may the good Yudhishtir win ! "

Vyasa spake : and good Yudhishtir took the *diksha* of the rite,
And commenced the sacred duty gladdening every living wight,

Round the altar's holy lustre moved the priests with sacred awe,
Swerved not from the rule of duty, failed not in the sacred law.

Done the rite of pure *pravargya* with the pious hymn and lay,
To the task of *abhishikva* priests and Brahmans led the way,

And the holy Soma-drinkers pressed the sacred Soma plant,
And performed the pure *savana* with the solemn *saman* chant.

Bounty waits upon the hungry, gifts dispel the suppliant's fear,
Gold revives the pure and lowly, mercy wipes the mourner's tear,

Under care relieves the stricken by the gracious king's command,
Harmony with loving sweetness spreads her smile o'er all the land,

Day by day the bright performance doth with sacred rites proceed,
Day by day on royal bounty poor and grateful myriads feed,

And adept in six Vedangas, strict in vow and rich in lore,
Sage preceptors, holy teachers, grow in virtue ever more !

Six good stakes of *vilva* timber, six of hard *khadira* wood,
Six of seasoned *sarvavarṇin*, on the place of offering stood,

Two were made of *devadaru*, pine that on Himalay grows,
One was made of wood of *slesha*, which the sacrificer knows,

Other stakes of golden lustre quaint with curious carving done,
Draped in silk and gold-brocaded like the constellations shone,

And the consecrated altar built and raised of bricks of gold,
Shone in splendour like the altar Daksha built in days of old,

Eighteen cubits square the structure, four deep layers of brick in height,
With a spacious winged triangle like an eagle in its flight !

Beasts whose flesh is pure and wholesome, dwellers of the lake or sky,
Priests assigned each varied offering to each heavenly power on high,

Bulls of various breed and colour, steeds of mettle true and tried,
Other creatures, full three hundred, to the many stakes were tied.

Deva-rishis viewed the feasting, sweet *Gandharvas* woke the song,
Apsaras like gleams of sunlight on the greensward tripped along,

Kinnaras and *Kin-purushas* mingled in the holy rite,
Siddhas of austerest penance stood around the sacred site, .

Vyasa's great and gifted pupils who the holy hymns compiled,
Helped the monarch's proud performance and upon his bounty smiled.

From the bright ethereal mansions heavenly minstrel Narad came,
Chitra-sena woke the music, singer of celestial fame,

Cheered by more than mortal music priests their holy task begun,
And Yudhishtir's fame and virtue with a brighter lustre shone !

IV

Sacrifice of the Horse

Birds and beasts were immolated for the sacrificial food,
Then before the sacred charger priests in rank and order stood,

And by rules of Veda guided slew the horse of noble breed,
Placed Draupadi, *Queen of Yajna*, by the slain and lifeless steed,

Hymns and gifts and deep devotion sanctified the noble dame,
Blessed her ever stainless virtue, and her ever spotless fame !

Priests adept in sacred duty cooked the steed with pious rite,
And the steam of welcome fragrance sanctified the sacred site.

Good Yudhishtir and his brothers, by the rules by sages spoke,
Piously inhaled the fragrance and the sin-destroying smoke.

Severed limbs and sacred fragments of the courser duly dressed,
Priests upon the blazing altar as a pious offering placed,

Vyasa herald of the Vedas raised his voice in holy song,
Blessed Hastina's righteous monarch and the many-nationed throng !

V

Gifts

Unto Brahmans gave Yudhishtir countless *Nishkas* of bright gold,
Unto sage and saintly Vyasa all his realm and wealth untold,

But the bard and ancient herald who the holy Vedas spake,
Rendered back the monarch's present, earthly gift he might not take !

"Thine is Kuru's ancient empire, rule the nations of the earth,
Gods have destined thee as monarch from the moment of thy birth,

Gold and wealth and costly present let the priests and Brahmans hoard,
Be it thine to rule thy subjects as their father and their lord !"

Krishna too in gentle accents to the doubting monarch said :
"Vyasa speaketh word of wisdom and his mandate be obeyed !"

From the saint the good Yudhishtir then received the Kuru-land,
With a threefold gift of riches gladdened all the priestly band,

Pious priests and grateful nations to their distant regions went,
And his share of presents Vyasa to the ancient Pritha sent.

Fame and virtue Kuru's monarch by the sacred offering wins,
And the rite of pure ablution cleanses all Yudhishtir's sins,

And he stands amid his brothers, brightly beaming, pure and high,
Even as INDRA stands encircled by the dwellers of the sky,

And the concourse of brave monarchs grace Yudhishtir's regal might,
As the stars and radiant planets grace the stillness of the night !

Gems and jewels in his bounty, gold and garments rich and rare,
Gave Yudhishtir to each monarch, slaves and damsels passing fair,

Loving gifts to dear relations, wealth to chiefs of righteous fame,
And the grateful parting monarchs blessed Yudhishtir's noble name.

Last of all with many tear-drops Krishna mounted on his car,
Faithful still in joy or sorrow, faithful still in peace or war,

Arjun's comrade, Bhima's helper, good Yudhishtir's friend of yore,
Krishna left Hastina's mansions for the sea-girt Dwarka's shore !

CONCLUSION

THE real Epic ends with the war and with the funerals of the deceased warriors, as we have stated before ; and Yudhishtir's Horse-Sacrifice is rather a crowning ornament than a part of the solid edifice. What follows the sacrifice is in no sense a part of the real Epic ; it consists merely of concluding personal narratives of the heroes who have figured in the poem.

Dhrita-rashtra retires into a forest with his queen Gandhari, and Pritha, the mother of the Pandav brothers, accompanies them. In the solitude of the forest, the old Dhrita-rashtra sees as in a vision the spirits of all the slain warriors, his sons and grandsons and kinsmen, clad and armed as they were in battle. The spirits disappear in the morning at the bidding of Vyasa who had called them up. At last Dhrita-rashtra and Gandhari and Pritha are burnt to death in a forest conflagration, death by fire being considered holy.

Krishna at Dwarka meets with strange and tragic adventures. The Vrishnis and the Andhakas become irrelegious and addicted to drinking, and fall a prey to internal dissensions. Valadeva and Krishna die shortly after, and the city of the Yadavas is swallowed up by the ocean.

Then follow the two concluding Books of the Epic, the *Great Journey*, and the *Ascent to Heaven*, so beautifully rendered into English by Sir Edwin Arnold. On hearing of the death of their friend Krishna, the Pandav brothers place Prakshit, the grandson of Arjun, on the throne, and retire to the Himalayas. Draupad drops down dead on the way, then Sahadeva, then Nakula, then Arjun, and then Bhima. Yudhishtir alone proceeds to heaven in person in a celestial car.

There Yudhishtir undergoes some trial, bathes in the celestial

Ganges, and rises with a celestial body. He then meets Krishna, now in his heavenly form, blazing in splendour and glory. He meets his brothers whom he had lost on earth, but who are now Immortals in the sky, clad in heavenly forms. INDRA himself appears before Yudhishtir, and introduces him to others who were dear to him on earth, and are dear to him in heaven. Thus speaks INDRA to Yudhishtir :

"This is She, the fair Immortal ! Her no human mother bore,
Sprung from altar as Draupadi human shape for thee she wore,

By the Wielder of the Trident she was waked to form and life,
Born in royal Drupad's mansion, righteous man, to be thy wife,

These are bright ærial beings, went for thee to lower earth,
Borne by Drupad's stainless daughter as thy children took their birth !

This is monarch Dhrita-rashtra who doth o'er *Gandharnas* reign,
This is peerless archer Karna, erst on earth by Arjun slain,

Like the Sun in ruddy splendour, for the Sun inspired his birth,
As the son of chariot-driver he was known upon the earth !

'Midst the *Sadhyas* and the *Maruts*, 'midst Immortals pure and bright,
Seek thy friends the faithful Vrishnis matchless in their warlike might,

Seek and find the brave Satyaki who upheld thy cause so well,
Seek the Bhojas and Andhakas who in Kuru-kshetra fell !

This is gallant Abhimanyu whom the fair Subhadra bore,
Still unconquered in the battle, slain by fraud on yonder shore,

Abhimanyu son of Arjun, wielding Arjun's peerless might,
With the Lord of Night he ranges, beauteous as the Lord of Night !

This, Yudhishtir, is thy father, by thy mother joined in heaven,
Oft he comes unto my mansions in his flowery chariot driven,

This is Bhishma stainless warrior, by the *Vasus* is his place,
By the god of heavenly wisdom teacher Drona sits in grace!

*These and other mighty warriors in the earthly battles slain,
By their valour and their virtue walk the bright ethereal plain,*

*They have cast their mortal bodies, crossed the radiant gate of heaven,
For to win celestial mansions unto mortals it is given,*

*Let them strive by kindly action, gentle speech, endurance long, —
Brighter life and holier future unto sons of men belong !”*

TRANSLATOR'S EPILOGUE

ANCIENT India, like ancient Greece, boasts of two great Epics. One of them, the *Maha-bharata*, relates to a great war in which all the warlike races of Northern India took a share, and may therefore be compared to the *Iliad*. The other, the *Ramayana*, relates mainly to the adventures of its hero, banished from his country and wandering for long years in the wilderness of Southern India, and may therefore be compared to the *Odyssey*. It is the first of these two Epics, the *Iliad* of Ancient India, which is the subject of the foregoing pages.

The great war which is the subject of the Epic is believed to have been fought in the thirteenth or fourteenth century before Christ. For generations and centuries after the war its main incidents must have been sung by bards and minstrels in the courts of Northern India. The war thus became the centre of a cycle of legends, songs, and poems in ancient India, even as Charlemagne and Arthur became the centres of legends in mediæval Europe. And then, probably under the direction of some enlightened king, the vast mass of legends and poetry, accumulated during centuries, was cast in narrative form and formed the Epic of the Great Bharata nation, and therefore called the *Maha-bharata*. The real facts of the war had been obliterated by age, legendary heroes had become the principal actors, and, as is invariably the case in India, the thread of a high moral purpose, of the triumph of virtue and the subjugation of vice, was woven into the fabric of the great Epic.

We should have been thankful if this Epic, as it was thus originally put together some centuries before the Christian era, had been preserved to us. But this was not to be. The Epic became so popular that it went on growing with the growth of centuries. Every generation of poets had something to add; every distant

nation in Northern India was anxious to interpolate some account of its deeds in the old record of the international war ; every preacher of a new creed desired to have in the old Epic some sanction for the new truths he inculcated. Passages from legal and moral codes were incorporated in the work which appealed to the nation much more effectively than dry codes ; and rules about the different castes and about the different stages of the human life were included for the same purpose. All the floating mass of tales traditions, legends, and myths, for which ancient India was famous, found a shelter under the expanding wings of this wonderful Epic ; and as Krishna-worship became the prevailing religion of India after the decay of Buddhism, the old Epic caught the complexion of the times, and Krishna-cult is its dominating religious idea in its present shape. It is thus that the work went on growing for a thousand years after it was first compiled and put together in the form of an Epic ; until the crystal rill of the Epic itself was all but lost in an unending morass of religious and didactic episodes, legends, tales, and traditions.

When the mischief had been done, and the Epic had nearly assumed its present proportions, a few centuries after Christ according to the late Dr. Bühler, an attempt was made to prevent the further expansion of the work. The contents of the Epic were described in some prefatory verses, and the number of couplets in each book was stated. The total number of couplets, according to this metrical preface, is about eighty-five thousand. But the limit so fixed has been exceeded in still later centuries ; further additions and interpolations have been made ; and the Epic as printed and published in Calcutta in this century contains over ninety thousand couplets, excluding the Supplement about the Race of Hari.

The modern reader will now understand the reason why this great Epic—the greatest work of imagination that Asia has produced—has never yet been put before the European reader in a readable form : A poem of ninety thousand couplets, about seven times the size of the Iliad and the Odyssey put together, is more than what the average reader can stand ; and the heterogeneous nature of its contents does not add to the interest of the work. If the religious

works of Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, the commentaries of Blackstone and the ballads of Percy, together with the tractarian writings of Newman, Keble, and Pusey, were all thrown into blank verse and incorporated with the *Paradise Lost*, the reader would scarcely be much to blame if he failed to appreciate that delectable compound. A complete translation of the *Maha-bharata* therefore into English verse is neither possible nor desirable, but portions of it have now and then been placed before English readers by distinguished writers. Dean Milman's graceful rendering of the story of Nala and Damayanti is still read and appreciated by a select circle of readers; and Sir Edwin Arnold's beautiful translation of the concluding books of the Epic is familiar to a larger circle of Englishmen. A complete translation of the Epic into English prose has also been published in India, and is useful to Sanscrit scholars for the purpose of reference.

But although the old Epic has thus been spoilt by unlimited expansion, yet nevertheless the leading incidents and characters of the real Epic are still discernible, uninjured by the mass of foreign substance in which they are embedded—even like those immortal marble figures which have been recovered from the ruins of an ancient world, and now beautify the museums of modern Europe. For years past I have thought that it was not impossible to exhume this buried Epic from the superincumbent mass of episodic matter, and to restore it to the modern world. For years past I have felt a longing to undertake this work, but the task was by no means an easy one. Leaving out all episodic matter, the leading narrative of the Epic forms about one-fourth of the work; and a complete translation even of this leading story would be unreadable, both from its length and its prolixness. On the other hand, to condense the story into shorter limits would be, not to make a translation, but virtually to write a new poem; and that was not what I desired to undertake, nor what I was competent to perform.

There seemed to me only one way out of this difficulty. The main incidents of Epic are narrated in the original work in passages which are neither diffuse nor unduly prolix, and which are interspersed in the leading narrative of the Epic as that narra-

ve itself is interspersed in the midst of more lengthy episodes. The more carefully I examined the arrangement, the more clearly it appeared to me that these main incidents of the Epic would bear a full and unabridged translation into English verse ; and that these translations, linked together by short connecting notes, would virtually present the entire story of the Epic to the modern reader in a form and within limits which might be acceptable. It would be, no doubt, a condensed version of the original Epic, but the condensation would be effected, not by the translator telling a short story in his own language, but by linking together those passages of the original which describe the main and striking incidents, and thus telling the main story as told in the original work. The advantage of this arrangement is that, in the passages presented to the reader, it is the poet who speaks to him, not the translator. Though vast portions of the original are skipped over, those which are presented are the portions which narrate the main incidents of the Epic, and they describe those incidents as told by the poet himself.

This is the plan I have generally adopted in the present work. Except in the three books which describe the actual war (Books viii., ix. and x.), the other nine books of this translation are complete translations of selected passages of the original work. I have not attempted to condense these passages nor to expand them ; I have attempted to put them before the English reader as they have been told by the poet in Sanscrit. Occasionally, but rarely, a few redundant couplets have been left out, or a long list of proper names of obscure allusions has been shortened ; and in one place only, at the beginning of the Fifth Book, I have added twelve couplets of my own to explain the circumstances under which the story of Savitri is told. Generally, therefore, the translation may be accepted as an unabridged, though necessarily a free translation of the passages describing the main incidents of the Epic.

From this method I have been compelled to depart, much against my wish, in the three books describing the actual war. No translation of an Epic relating to a great war can be acceptable which does not narrate the main events of the war. The war of the *Maha-bharata* was a series of eighteen battles, fought on eighteen consecutive days,

and I felt it necessary to present the reader with an account of each day's work. In order to do so, I have been compelled to condense, and not merely to translate selected passages. For the transactions of the war, unlike the other incidents of the Epic, have been narrated in the original with almost inconceivable prolixity and endless repetition; and the process of condensation in these three books has therefore been severe and thorough. But, nevertheless, even in these books I have endeavoured to preserve the character and the spirit of the original. Not only are the incidents narrated in the same order as in the original, but they are told in the style of the poet as far as possible. Even the similes and metaphors and figures of speech are all or mostly adopted from the original; the translator has not ventured either to adopt his own distinct style of narration, or to improve on the style of the original with his own decorations.

Such is the scheme I have adopted in presenting an Epic of ninety thousand Sanscrit couplets in about two thousand English couplets.

The excellent and deservedly popular prose translation of the *Odyssey* of Homer by Messrs. Butcher and Lang often led me to think that perhaps a prose translation of these selected passages from the *Maha-bharata* might be more acceptable to the modern reader. But a more serious consideration of the question dispelled that idea. Homer has an interest for the European reader which the *Maha-bharata* cannot lay claim to; as the father of European poetry he has a claim on the veneration of modern Europe which an Indian poet can never pretend to. To thousands of European readers Homer is familiar in the original, to hundreds of thousands he is known in various translations in various modern languages. What Homer actually wrote, a numerous class of students in Europe wish to know; and a literal prose translation therefore is welcome, after the great Epic has been so often translated in verse. The case is very different with the *Maha-bharata*, practically unknown to European readers. And the translators of Homer themselves gracefully acknowledge, "We have tried to transfer not all the truth about the poem, but the historical truth into English. In this process Homer must lose at least half his charm, his bright and equable

speed, the musical current of that narrative, which, like the river of Egypt, flows from an undiscoverable source, and mirrors the temples and the palaces of unforgotten gods and kings. Without the music of verse, only a half truth about Homer can be told."

Another earnest worker of the present day, who is endeavouring to interpret to modern Englishmen the thoughts and sentiments and poetry of their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, has emphatically declared that "of all possible translations of poetry, a merely prose translation is the most inaccurate." "Prose", says Mr. Stopford Brooke, further on, "no more represents poetry than architecture does music. Translations of poetry are never much good, but at least they should always endeavour to have the musical movement of poetry, and to obey the laws of the verse they translate."

This appears to me to be a very sound maxim. And one of my greatest difficulties in the task I have undertaken has been to try and preserve something of the "musical movement" of the sonorous Sanscrit poetry in the English translation. Much of the Sanscrit Epic is written in the well-known *Sloka* metre of sixteen syllables in each line, and I endeavoured to choose some English metre which is familiar to the English ear, and which would reproduce to some extent the rhythm, the majesty, and the long and measured sweep of the Sanscrit verse. It was necessary to adopt such a metre in order to transfer something of the truth about the *Maha-bharata* into English, for without such reproduction or imitation of the musical movement of the original very much less than a half truth is told. My kind friend Mr. Edmund Russell impelled by that enthusiasm for Indian poetry and Indian art which is a part of him, rendered me valuable help and assistance in this matter, and I gratefully acknowledge the benefit I have derived from his advice and suggestions. After considerable trouble and anxiety, and after rendering several books in different English metres, I felt convinced that the one finally adopted was nearer approach to the Sanscrit *Sloka* than any other familiar English metre known to me.

I have recited a verse in this English metre and a *Sloka* in presence of listeners who have a better ear for music than myself, and

they have marked the close resemblance. I quote a few lines from the Sanscrit showing varieties of the *Sloka* metre, and comparing them with the scheme of the English metre selected.

Ēśhā Kuntisutah sriman | eshā madhyāma Pāṇḍavāh

Ēśhā putro Mahēndrasyā | Kūrunam eshā rakshītā

—*Maha-bharata*, i. 5357.

Yet I doubt not through the ages | one increasing purpose runs
And the thoughts of men are widened | with the process of the suns
—*Locksley Hall*.

Malānchā samūpādayā | kānchānim samālamkrītām

Avatīrṇa tato rāṅgām | Draupādī Bhāratar-bābhā

—*Maha-bharata*, i. 6974.

Visions of the days departed | shadowy phantoms filled my brain ;
Those who live in history only | seemed to walk the earth again
—*Belfry of Bruges*.

Āsuryām iva sūryenā | nirvatām iva vāyūna

Bhāsītām hlādītānchāiṣā | Krishnenedām sādō hī nāh

—*Maha-bharata*, ii. 1334.

Quaint old town of toil and traffic | quaint old town of art and song
Memories haunt thy pointed gables, | like the rooks that round thee throng.

—*Nürnberg*.

Ha Pandō hā mahārāja | kvāsi kīm sāmūpekshasē

Putran vivasyātaḥ sādhun | āribhīr dyutanīrjitan

—*Maha-bharata*, ii. 2610.

hēr ear hē whisperš gaily, | If mȳ heart bȳ signš cān tell,

idēn I havē watchēd thēē daily, | And Ī think thōū lov'st mē well

—*Lord of Burleigh*.

It would be too much to assume that even with the help of this similarity in metres, I have been able to transfer into my English that sweep and majesty of verse which is the charm of Sanscrit, and which often sustains and elevates the simplest narration and the plainest ideas. Without the support of those sustaining wings, my poor narration must often plod through the dust; and I can only ask for the indulgence of the reader, which every translator of poetry from a foreign language can with reason ask, if the story as told in the translation is sometimes but a plain, simple, and homely narrative. For any artistic decoration I have neither the inclination nor the necessary qualification. The crisp and ornate style, the quaint expression, the chiselled word, the new-coined phrase, in which modern English poetry is rich, would scarcely suit the translation of an old Epic whose predominating characteristic is its simple and easy flow of narrative. Indeed, the *Maha-bharata* would lose that unadorned simplicity which is its first and foremost feature if the translator ventured to decorate it with the art of the modern day, even if he had been qualified to do so.

For if there is one characteristic feature which distinguishes the *Maha-bharata* (as well as the other Indian Epic, the *Ramayana*) from all later Sanscrit literature, it is the grand simplicity of its narrative, which contrasts with the artificial graces of later Sanscrit poetry. The poetry of Kalidasa, for instance, is ornate and beautiful, and almost scintillates with similes in every verse; the poetry of the *Maha-bharata* is plain and unpolished, and scarcely stoops to a simile or a figure of speech unless the simile comes naturally to the

poet. The great deeds of goodlike kings sometimes suggest to the poet the mighty deeds of gods; the rushing of warriors suggests the rushing of angry elephants in the echoing jungle; the flight of whistling arrows suggests the flight of sea-birds; the sound and movement of surging crowds suggest the heaving of billows; the erect attitude of a warrior suggests a tall cliff; the beauty of a maiden suggests the soft beauty of the blue lotus. When such comparisons come naturally to the poet, he accepts them and notes them down, but he never seems to go in quest of them, he is never anxious to beautify and decorate. He seems to trust entirely to his grand narrative, to his heroic characters, to his stirring incidents, to hold millions of listeners in perpetual thrall. The majestic and sonorous Sanscrit metre is at his command, and even this he uses carelessly, and with frequent slips, known as *arsha* to later grammarians. The poet certainly seeks for no art to decorate his tale, he trusts to the lofty chronicle of bygone heroes to enchain the listening mankind.

And what heroes! In the delineation of character the *Mahābhārata* is far above anything which we find in later Sanscrit poetry. Indeed, with much that is fresh and sweet and lovely in later Sanscrit poetry, there is little or no portraiture of character. All heroes are cast much in the same heroic mould; all love-sick heroines suffer in silence and burn with fever, all fools are shrewd and impudent by turns, all knaves are heartless and cruel and suffer in the end. There is not much to distinguish between one warrior and another, between one tender woman and her sister. In the *Mahābhārata* we find just the reverse; each hero has a distinct individuality, a character of his own, clearly discernible from that of other heroes. No work of the imagination that could be named, always excepting the *Iliad*, is so rich and so true as the *Mahābhārata* in the portraiture of the human character,—not in torment and suffering as in Dante, not under overwhelming passions as in Shakespeare,—but human character in its calm dignity of strength and repose, like those immortal figures in marble which the ancients turned out, and which modern sculptors have vainly sought to reproduce. The old Kuru monarch Dhritā-rashtra, sightless and feeble, but majestic in his ancient grandeur; the noble grandsire Bhishma,

"death's subduer" and unconquerable in war ; the doughty Drona, venerable priest and vengeful warrior ; and the proud and peerless archer Karna—have each a distinct character of his own which cannot be mistaken for a moment. The good and royal Yudhishtir, (I omit the final *a* in some long names which occur frequently), the "tiger-wasted" Bhima, and the "helmet-wearing" Arjun are the Agamemnon, the Ajax, and the Achilles of the Indian Epic. The proud and unyielding Duryodhan, and the fierce and fiery Duhsasan stand out foremost among the wrathful sons of the feeble old Kuru monarch. And Krishna possesses a character higher than that of Ulysses ; unmatched in human wisdom, ever striving for righteousness and peace, he is thorough and unrelenting in war when war has begun. And the women of the Indian Epic possess characters as marked as those of the men. The stately and majestic queen Gandhari, the loving and doting mother Pritha, the proud and scornful Draupadi nursing her wrath till her wrongs are fearfully revenged, and the bright and brilliant and sunny Subhadra,—these are distinct images pencilled by the hand of a true master in the realm of creative imagination.

And if the characters of the *Mahabharata* impress themselves on the reader, the incidents of the Epic are no less striking. Every scene of the shifting stage is a perfect and impressive picture. The tournament of the princes in which Arjun and Karna—the Achilles and Hector of the Indian Epic—first met and each marked the other for his foe ; the gorgeous bridal of Draupadi ; the equally gorgeous coronation of Yudhishtir and the death, of the proud and the boisterous Sisupala ; the fatal game of dice and the scornful wrath of Draupadi against her insulters ; the calm beauty of the forest-life of the Pandavs : the cattle-lifting in Matsyaland in which the gallant Arjun threw off his disguise and stood forth as warrior and conquerer ; and the Homeric speeches of the warriors in the council of war on the eve of the great contest,—each scene of this venerable old Epic impresses itself on the mind of the hushed and astonished reader. Then follows the war of eighteen days. The first few days are more or less uneventful, and have been condensed in this translation, often into a few couplets ; but the interest of the

reader increases as he approaches the final battle and fall of the grand old fighter Bhishma. Then follows the stirring story of the death of Arjun's gallant boy, and Arjun's fierce revenge, and the death of the priest and warrior, doughty Drona. Last comes the crowning event of the Epic, the final contest between Arjun and Karna, the heroes of the Epic, and the war ends in midnight slaughter and the death of Duryodhan. The rest of the story is told in this translation in two books describing the funerals of the deceased warriors, and Yudhishtir's horse-sacrifice.

"The poems of Homer," says Mr. Gladstone, "differ from all other known poetry in this that they constitute in themselves an encyclopædia of life and knowledge; at a time when knowledge, indeed, such as lies beyond the bounds of actual experience, was extremely limited, and when life was singularly fresh, vivid and expansive." This remark applies with even greater force to the *Mahabharata*; it is an encyclopædia of the life and knowledge of Ancient India. And it discloses to us an ancient and forgotten world, a proud and noble civilisation which has passed away. Northern India was then parcelled among warlike races living side by side under their warlike kings, speaking the same language, performing the same religious rites and ceremonies, rejoicing in a common literature, rivalling each other in their schools of philosophy and learning as in the arts of peace and civilisation, and forming a confederation of Hindu nations unknown to, and unknowing the outside world. What this confederation of nations has done for the cause of human knowledge and human civilisation is a matter of history. Their inquiries into the hidden truths of religion, embalmed in the ancient *Upanishads* have never been excelled within the last three thousand years. Their inquiries into philosophy, preserved in the *Sankhya* and the *VeJanta* systems, were the first systems of true philosophy which the world produced. And their great works of imagination, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* will be placed without hesitation by the side of Homer by critics who survey the world's literatures from a lofty stand point and judge impartially of the wares turned out by the hand of man in all parts of the globe. It is scarcely necessary to add

that the discoveries of the ancient Hindus in science, and specially in mathematics, are the heritage of the modern world; and that the lofty religion of Buddha, proclaimed in India five centuries before Christ, is now the religion of a third of the human race.

For the rest, the people of modern India know how to appreciate their ancient heritage. It is not an exaggeration to state that the two hundred millions of Hindus of the present day cherish in their hearts the story of their ancient Epics. The Hindu scarcely lives, man or woman, high or low, educated or ignorant, whose earliest recollections do not cling round the story and the characters of the great Epics. The almost illiterate oil-manufacturer or confectioner of Bengal spells out some modern translation of the *Maha-bharata* to while away his leisure hour. The tall and stalwart peasantry of the North-West know of the five Pandav brothers, and of their friend the righteous Krishna. The people of Bombay and Madras cherish with equal ardour the story of the righteous war. And even the traditions and tales interspersed in the Epic, and which spoil the work as an Epic, have themselves a charm and an attraction; and the morals inculcated in these tales sink into the hearts of a naturally religious people, and form the basis of their moral education. Mothers in India know no better theme for imparting wisdom and instruction to their daughters, and elderly men know no richer storehouse for narrating tales to children, than these stories preserved in the Epics. No work in Europe, not Homer in Greece or Virgil in Italy, not Shakespeare or Milton in English-speaking lands, is the *national* property of the nations to the same extent as the Epics of India are of the Hindus. No single work except the Bible has such influence in affording moral instruction in Christian lands as the *Maha-bharata* and the *Ramayana* in India. They have been the cherished heritage of the Hindus for three thousand years; they are to the present day interwoven with the thoughts and beliefs and moral ideas of a nation numbering two hundred millions.

ROMESH DUTT.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON,
13th August 1898.

O Namasthase The Sen.

RAMAYANA

EPIC OF RAMA, PRINCE OF INDIA

TO

THE RIGHT HON. PROFESSOR F. MAX MÜLLER

WHO HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFETIME TO THE ELUCIDATION OF

THE LEARNING, LITERATURE, AND RELIGION OF

ANCIENT INDIA

AND HAS RECOGNISED AND VINDICATED WHAT IS

TRUE AND GREAT AND ENNOBLING IN

MODERN INDIA

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE RAMAYANA

IS DEDICATED AS A

SINCERE TOKEN OF THE ESTEEM AND REGARD OF MY COUNTRYMEN

CONTENTS.

RAMAYANA

<i>Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. SITA-SWAYAMVARA (THE BIRDAL OF SITA) . . .	1
II. VANA-GAMANA-ADESA (THE BANISHMENT) . . .	17
III. DASARATHA-VIYOGA (THE DEATH OF THE KING) . . .	38
IV. RAMA-BHARATA-SAMBADA (THE MEETING OF THE PRINCES) . . .	63
V. PANCHAVATI (ON THE BANKS OF THE GODAVARI) . . .	77
VI. SITA-HARANA (SITA LOST)	88
VII. KISHKINDHA (IN THE NILGIRI MOUNTAINS.) . . .	104
VIII. SITA-SANDESA (SITA DISCOVERED)	118
IX. RAVANA-SABHA (THE COUNCIL OF WAR)	127
X. YUDDHA (THE WAR IN CEYLON)	137
XI. RAJYA-ABHISHEKA (RAMA'S RETURN AND CONSECRATION). . .	161
XII. ASWA-MEDHA (SACRIFICE OF THE HORSE)	171
CONCLUSION	179
TRANSLATOR'S EPILOGUE	181

THE EPIC OF RAMA,

PRINCE OF INDIA

BOOK I

SITA-SWAYAMVARA

(The Bridal of Sita)

THE Epic relates to the ancient traditions of two powerful races, the Kosalas and the Videhas, who lived in Northern India between the twelfth and tenth centuries before Christ. The names Kosala and Videha in the singular number indicate the kingdoms,—Oudh and North Behar,—and in the plural number they mean the ancient races which inhabited those two countries.

According to the Epic, Dasa-ratha king of the Kosalas had four sons, the eldest of whom was Rama the hero of the poem. And Janak king of the Videhas had a daughter named Sita, who was miraculously born of a field furrow, and who is the heroine of the Epic.

Janak ordained a severe test for the hand of his daughter, and many a prince and warrior came and went away disappointed. Rama succeeded, and won Sita. The story of Rama's winning his bride, and of the marriage of his three brothers with the sister and cousins of Sita, forms the subject of this Book.

The portions translated in this Book form Section vi., Sections lxvii. to lxix, Section lxxiii., and Section lxxvii. of Book i. of the original text.

EPICS AND LAYS OF ANCIENT INDIA

I

Ayodhya, the Righteous City

Rich in royal worth and valour, rich in holy Vedic lore,
Dasa-ratha ruled his empire in the happy days of yore,

Loved of men in fair Ayodhya, sprung of ancient Solar Race,
Royal *rishi* in his duty, saintly *rishi* in his grace,

Great as INDRA in his prowess, bounteous as KUVERA kind,
Dauntless deeds subdued his foemen, lofty faith subdued his mind !

Like the ancient monarch Manu, father of the human race,
Dasa-ratha ruled his people with a father's loving grace,

Truth and Justice swayed each action and each baser motive quelled,
People's Love and Monarch's Duty every thought and deed impelled,

And his town like INDRA's city,—tower and dome and turret brave—
Rose in proud and peerless beauty on Sarayu's limpid wave !

Peaceful lived the righteous people, rich in wealth in merit high,
Envy dwelt not in their bosoms and their accents shaped no lie,

Fathers with their happy households owned their cattle, corn and gold
Galling penury and famine in Ayodhya had no hold,

Neighbours lived in mutual kindness helpful with their ample wealth,
None who begged the wasted refuse, none who lived by fraud and stealth

And they wore the gem and earring, wreath and fragrant sandal paste,
And their arms were decked with bracelets, and their necks with *niskhas*
graced,

Cheat and braggart and deceiver lived not in the ancient town,
Proud despiser of the lowly wore not insults in their frown,

Poorer fed not on the richer, hireling friend upon the great,
None with low and lying accents did upon the proud man wait !

Men to plighted vows were faithful, faithful was each loving wife,
Impure thought and wandering fancy stained not holy wedded life,

Robed in gold and graceful garments, fair in form and fair in face,
Winsome were Ayodhya's daughters, rich in wit and woman's grace !

Twice-born men were free from passion, lust of gold and impure greed,
Faithful to their Rites and Scriptures, truthful in their word and deed,

Altar blazed in every mansion, from each home was bounty given,
Snooped no man to fulsome falsehood, questioned none the will of
Heaven.

Kshatras bowed to holy Brahman, Vaisyas to the Kshatras bowed,
Toiling Sudras lived by labour, of their honest duty proud,

To the Gods and to the Fathers, to each guest in virtue trained,
Rites were done with due devotion as by holy writ ordained.

Pure each caste in due observance, stainless was each ancient rite,
And the nation thrived and prospered by its old and matchless might,

And each man in truth abiding lived a long and peaceful life,
With his sons and with his grandsons, with his loved and honoured wife.

Thus was ruled the ancient city by her monarch true and bold,
As the earth was ruled by Manu in the misty days of old,

Troops who never turned in battle, fierce as fire and strong and brave,
Guarded well her lofty ramparts as the lions guard the cave.

Steeds like INDRA's in their swiftness came from far Kamboja's land,
From Vanaya and Vahlika and from Sindhu's rock-bound strand,

Elephants of mighty stature from the Vindhya mountains came,
Or from deep and darksome forests round Himalay's peaks of fame,

Matchless in their mighty prowess, peerless in their wondrous speed,
Nobler than the noble tuskers sprung from high celestial breed.

Thus Ayodhya, "virgin city"—faithful to her haughty name,—
Ruled by righteous Dasa-ratha won a world-embracing fame,

Strong-barred gates and lofty arches, tower and dome and turret high
Decked the vast and peopled city fair as mansion of the sky.

Queens of proud and peerless beauty born of houses rich in fame,
Loved of royal Dasa-ratha to his happy mansion came,

Queen Kausalya blessed with virtue true and righteous Rama bore,
Queen Kaikeyi young and beauteous bore him Bharat rich in lore,

Queen Simitra bore the bright twins, Lakshman and Satrugghna bold,
Four brave princes served their father in the happy days of old !

II

Mithila, and the Breaking of the Bow

Janak monarch of Videha spake his message near and far,—
He shall win my peerless Sita who shall bend my bow of war,—

Suitors came from farthest regions, warlike princes known to fame,
Vainly strove to wield the weapon, left Videha in their shame.

Viswa-mitra royal *rishi* Rama true and Lakshman bold,
Came to fair Mithila's city from Ayodhya famed of old,

Spake in pride the royal *rishi* : " Monarch of Videha's throne,
Grant, the wondrous bow of RUDRA be to princely Rama shown." —

Janak spake his royal mandate to his lords and warriors bold :
 " Bring ye forth the bow of RUDRA decked in garlands and in gold,"

And his peers and proud retainers waiting on the monarch's call,
 Brought the great and goodly weapon from the city's inner hall.

Stalwart men of ample stature pulled the mighty iron car
 In which rested all-inviolatè Janak's dreaded bow of war,

And where midst assembled monarchs sat Videha's godlike king,
 With a mighty toil and effort did the eight-wheeled chariot bring.

" This the weapon of Videha," proudly thus the peers begun,
 " Be it shewn to royal Rama, Dasa-ratha's righteous son,"

" This the bow," then spake the monarch to the *rishi* famed of old,
 To the true and righteous Rama and to Lakshman young and bold,

" This the weapon of my fathers prized by kings from age to age,
 Mighty chiefs and sturdy warriors could not bend it, noble sage !

Gods before the bow of RUDRA have in righteous terror quailed,
Rakshas fierce and stout *Asuras* have in futile effort failed,

Mortal man will struggle vainly RUDRA's wondrous bow to bend,
 Vainly strive to string the weapon and the shining dart to send,

Holy, saint and royal *rishi*, here is Janak's ancient bow,
 Shew it to Ayodhya's princes, speak to them my kingly vow !"

Viswa-mitra humbly listened to the words the monarch said,
 To the brave and righteous Rama, Janak's mighty bow displayed,

Rama lifted high the cover of the pond'rous iron car,
 Gazed with conscious pride and prowess on the mighty bow of war.

"Let me," humbly spake the hero, "on this bow my fingers place,
Let me lift and bend the weapon, help me with your loving grace,"

"Be it so," the *rishi* answered, "be it so," the monarch said,
Rama lifted high the weapon on his stalwart arms displayed,

Wond'ring gazed the kings assembled as the son of Raghu's race
Proudly raised the bow of RUDRA with a warrior's stately grace,

Proudly strung the bow of RUDRA which the kings had tried in vain,
Drew the cord with force resistless till the weapon snapped in twain!

Like the thunder's pealing accent rose the loud terrific clang,
And the firm earth shook and trembled and the hills in echoes rang,

And the chiefs and gathered monarchs fell and fainted in their fear,
And the men of many nations shook the dreadful sound to hear!

Pale and white the startled monarchs slowly from their terror woke,
And with royal grace and greetings Janak to the *rishi* spoke:

"Now my ancient eyes have witnessed wond'rous deed by Rama done,
Deed surpassing thought or fancy wrought by Dasa-ratha's son,

And the proud and peerless princess, Sita glory of my house,
Sheds on me an added lustre as she weds a godlike spouse,

True shall be my plighted promise, Sita dearer than my life,
Won by worth and wond'rous valour shall be Rama's faithful wife!

Grant us leave, O royal *rishi*, grant us blessings kind and fair,
Envoys mounted on my chariot to Ayodhya shall repair,

They shall speak to Rama's father glorious feat by Rama done,
They shall speak to Dasa-ratha, Sita is by valour won,

They shall say the noble princes safely live within our walls,
They shall ask him by his presence to adorn our palace halls!"

Pleased at heart the sage assented, envoys by the monarch sent,
To Ayodhya's distant city with the royal message went.

III

The Embassy to Ayodhya

Three nightshalt in their journey with their steeds fatigued and spent,
Envoys from Mithila's monarch to Ayodhya's city went,

And by royal mandate bidden stepped within the palace hall,
Where the ancient Dasa-ratha sat with peers and courtiers all,

And with greetings and obeisance spake their message calm and bold,
Softly fell their gentle accents as their happy tale they told.

"Greetings to thee, mighty monarch, greetings to each priest and peer,
Wishes for thy health and safety from Videha's king we bear,

Janak monarch of Videha for thy happy life hath prayed,
And the Viswa-mitra's bidding words of gladsome message said :

"Known on earth my plighted promise, spoke by heralds near and far,—
He shall win my peerless Sita who shall bend my bow of war,—

Monarchs came and princely suitors, chiefs and warriors known to fame,
Baffled in their fruitless effort left Mithila in their shame,

Rama came with gallant Lakshman by their proud preceptor led,
Bent and broke the mighty weapon, he the beautiful bride shall wed !

Rama strained the weapon stoutly till it snapped and broke in twain,
In the concourse of the monarchs, in the throng of armed men,

Rama wins the peerless princess by the righteous will of Heaven,
I redeem my plighted promise—be thy kind permission given !

Monarch of Kosala's country ! with each lord and peer and priest,
Welcome to Mithila's city, welcome to Videha's feast,

Joy thee in thy Rama's triumph, joy thee with a father's pride,
Let each prince of proud Kosala win a fair Videha-bride !"

These by Viswa-mitra's bidding are the words our monarch said,
This by Sata-nanda's counsel is the quest that he hath made."

Joyful was Kosala's monarch, spake to chieftains in the hall,
Vama-deva and Vasishtha and to priests and Brahmans all :

"Priests and peers ! in far Mithila, so these friendly envoys tell,
Righteous Rama, gallant Laskhman, in the royal palace dwell,

And our brother of Videha prizes Rama's warlike pride,
To each prince of proud Kosala yields a fair Videha-bride,

If it please ye, priests and chieftains, speed we to Mithila fair,
World-renowned is Janak's virtue, Heaven-inspired his learning rare !"

Spake each peer and holy Brahman : "Dasa-ratha's will be done !"
Spake the king unto the envoys : "Part we with the rising sun !"

Honoured with a régál honour, welcomed to a rich repast,
Gifted envoys from Mithila day and night in gladness passed !

IV

Meeting of Janak and Dasa-ratha

On Ayodhya's tower and turret now the golden morning woke,
Dasa-ratha-girt by courtiers thus to wise Sumantra spoke :

"Bid the keepers of my treasure with their waggons lead the way,
Ride in front with royal riches, gold and gems in bright array,

Bid my warriors skilled in duty lead the four-fold ranks of war,
Elephants and noble chargers, serried foot and battle-car,

Bid my faithful chariot-driver harness quick each car of state,
With the fleetest of my coursers, and upon my orders wait.

Vama-deva and Vasishtha versed in *Veda's* ancient lore,
Kasyapa and good Jabali sprung from holy saints of yore,

Markandeya in his glory, Katyayana in his pride,
Let each priest and proud preceptor with Kosala's monarch hide,

Harness to my royal chariot strong and stately steeds of war,
For the envoys speed my journey and the way is long and far."

With each priest and proud retainer Dasa-ratha led the way,
Glittering ranks of forces followed in their four-fold dread array,

Four days on the way they journeyed till they reached Videha's land,
Janak with a courteous welcome came to greet the royal band.

Joyously Videha's monarch greeted every priest and peer,
Greeted ancient Dasa-ratha in his accents soft and clear :

"Hast thou come, my royal brother, on my house to yield thy grace,
Hast thou made a peaceful journey, pride of Raghu's royal race ?

Welcome ! for Mithila's people seek my royal guest to greet,
Welcome ! for thy sons of valour long their loving sire to meet,

Welcome too the priest Vasishtha versed the *Veda's* ancient lore,
Welcome every righteous *rishi* sprung from holy saints of yore !

And my evil fates are vanquished and my race is sanctified,
With the warlike race of Raghu thus in loving bonds allied,

Sacrifice and rites auspicious we ordain with rising sun,
Ere the evening's darkness closes, happy nuptials shall be done !"

Thus in kind and courteous accents Janak spake his purpose high,
And his royal love responding, Dasa-ratha made reply :

" Gift betokens giver's bounty,—so our ancient sages sing,—
And thy righteous fame and virtue grace and gift, Videha's king !

World-renowned is Janak's bounty, Heaven-inspired his holy grace,
And we take his boon and blessing as an honour to our race ! "

Royal grace and kingly greetings marked the ancient monarch's word
Janak with a graceful pleasure Dasa-ratha's answer heard,

And the Brahmans and preceptors joyously the midnight spent,
And in converse pure and pleasant and in sacred sweet content.

Righteous Rama gallant Lakshman piously their father greet,
Duly make their deep obeisance, humbly touch his royal feet,

And the night is filled with gladness for the king revered and old,
Honoured by the saintly Janak, greeted by his children bold,

On Mithila's tower and turret stars their silent vigils keep,
When each sacred rite completed, Janak seeks his nightly sleep.

V

The Preparation .

All his four heroic princes now with Dasa-ratha stayed
In Mithila's ancient city, and their father's will obeyed,

Thither came the bold Yudhajit prince of proud Kaikeya's line,
On the day that Dasa-ratha made his gifts of gold and kine,

And he met the ancient monarch, for his health and safety prayed,
Made his bow and due obeisance and in gentle accents said :

" List, O king ! my royal father, monarch of Kaikeya's race,
Sends his kindly love and greetings with his blessings and his grace,

And he asks if Dasa-ratha prospers in his wonted health,
If his friends and fond relations live in happiness and wealth.

Queen Kaikeyi is my sister, and to see her son I came,
Bharat prince of peerless virtue, worthy of his father's fame,

Ave, to see that youth of valour, by my royal father sent,
To Ayodhya's ancient city with an anxious heart I went,

In the city of Mithila,—thus did all thy subjects say,—
With his sons and with his kinsmen Dasa-ratha makes his stay,

Hence in haste I journeyed hither, travelling late and early dawn,
For to do thee due obeisance and to greet my sister's son !”

Spake the young and proud Kaikeya, dear and duly-greeted guest,
Dasa-ratha on his brother choicest gifts and honours pressed.

Brightly dawned the happy morning, and Kosala's king of fame
With his sons and wise Vasishtha to the sacred *yajna* came,

Rama and his gallant brothers decked in gem and jewel bright,
In th' auspicious hour of morning did the blest *Kautuka* rite,

And beside their royal father piously the princes stood,
And to fair Videha's monarch spake Vasishtha wise and good :

“ Dasa-ratha waits expectant with each proud and princely son,
Waits upon the bounteous giver, for each holy rite is done,

Twixt the giver and the taker sacred word is sacred deed,
Seal with gift thy plighted promise, let the nuptial rites proceed !”

Thus the righteous-souled Vasishtha to Videha's monarch prayed,
Janak versed in holy *Vedas* thus in courteous accents said :

“ Wherefore waits the king, ~~Wherefore waits the king~~ Free to him this royal dome,
Since my kingdom is his empire and my palace is his home,

And the maidens, flame-resplendent, done each fond *Kautuka* rite,
Beaming in their bridal beauty tread the sacrificial site !”

I beside the lighted altar wait upon thy sacred best,
And auspicious is the moment, sage Vasishtha knows the rest,

Let the peerless Dasa-ratha, proud Kosala's king of might,
With his sons and honoured sages enter on the holy site,

Let the righteous sage Vasishtha, sprung from Vedic saints of old,
Celebrate the happy wedding ; be the sacred *mantras* told !"

VI

The Wedding

Sage Vasishtha skilled in duty placed Videha's honoured king,
Viswa-mitra, Sata-nanda, all within the sacred ring,

And he raised the holy altar as the ancient writs ordain,
Decked and graced with scented garlands grateful unto gods and men.

And he set the golden ladles, vases pierced by artists skilled,
Holy censers fresh and fragrant, cups with sacred honey filled,

Sanka howls and shining salvers, *arghya* plates for honoured guest,
Parched rice arranged in dishes, corn unhusked that filled the rest,

And with careful hand Vasishtha grass around the altar flung,
Offered gift to lighted AGNI and the sacred *mantra* sung !

Softly came the sweet-eyed Sita,—bridal blush upon her brow,—
Rama in his manly beauty came to take the sacred vow,

Janak placed his beauteous daughter facing Dasa-ratha's son,
Spoke with father's fond emotion and the holy rite was done :

" *This is Sita child of Janak, dearer unto him than life,
Henceforth sharer of thy virtue, be she, prince, thy faithful wife,*

*Of thy weal and woe partaker, be she thine in every land,
Cherish her in joy and sorrow, clasp her hand within thy hand,*

*As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And my Sita best of women follows thee in death or life !"*

Tears bedew his ancient bosom, gods and men his wishes share,
And he sprinkles holy water on the blest and wedded pair.

Next he turned to Sita's sister, Urmila of beauty rare,
And to Lakshman young and valiant spake in accents soft and fair :

*" Lakshman, dauntless in thy duty, loved of men and Gods above,
Take my dear devoted daughter, Urmila of stainless love,*

*Lakshman, fearless in thy virtue, take thy true and faithful wife,
Clasp her hand within thy fingers, be she thine in death or life !"*

To his brother's child Mandavi, Janak turned with father's love,
Yielded her to righteous Bharat, prayed for blessings from above :

*" Bharat, take the fair Mandavi, be she thine in death or life,
Clasp her hand within thy fingers as thy true and faithful wife !"*

Last of all was Sruta-kriti, fair in form and fair in face,
And her gentle name was honoured for her acts of righteous grace,

*" Take her by the hand, Satrughna, be she thine in death or life,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife !"*

Then the princes held the maidens, hand embraced in loving hand,
And Vasishtha spake the *mantra*, holiest priest in all the land,

And as ancient rite ordaineth, and as sacred laws require,
Stepped each bride and princely bridegroom round the altar's lighted fire,

Round Videha's ancient monarch, round the holy *rishis* all,
Lightly stepped the gentle maidens; proudly stepped the princes all !

And a rain of flowers descended from the sky serene and fair,
And a soft celestial music filled the fresh and fragrant air,

Bright *Gandharvas* skilled in music waked the sweet celestial song,
Fair *Apsaras* in their beauty on the green sward tripped along !

As the flowery rain descended and the music rose in pride,
Thrice around the lighted altar every bridegroom led his bride,

And the nuptial rites were ended, princes took their brides away,
Janak followed with his courtiers, and the town was proud and gay !

VII

Return to Ayodhya

With his wedded sons and daughters and his guard in bright array,
To the famed and fair Ayodhya, Dasa-ratha held his way,

And they reached the ancient city decked with banners bright and brave
And the voice of drum and trumpet hailed the home-returning brave.

Fragrant blossoms strewed the pathway, song of welcome filled the air
Joyous men and merry women issued forth in garments fair,

And they lifted up their faces and they waved their hands on high,
And they raised the voice of welcome as their righteous king drew nigh.

Greeted by his loving subjects, welcomed by his priests of fame,
Dasa-ratha with the princes to his happy city came,

With the brides and stately princes in the town he held his way,
Entered slow his lofty palace bright as peak of Himalay.

Queen Kausalya blessed with virtue, Queen Kaikeyi in her pride,
Queen Sumitra sweetly loving, greeted every happy bride,

ft-eyed Sita noble-destined, Umila of spotless fame,
 andavi and Sruta-kirti to their loving mothers came.

ecked in silk and queenly garments they performed each pious rite,
 ough their blessings on the household, bowed to Gods of holy might,
 owed to all the honoured elders, blest the children with their love,
 nd with soft and sweet endearment by their loving consorts moved.

appy were the wedded princes peerless in their warlike might,
 nd they dwelt in stately mansions like KÜVERA'S mansions bright,

oving wife and troops of kinsmen, wealth and glory on them wait,
 filial love and fond affection sanctify their happy fate.

Once when on the palace chambers bright the golden morning woke,
 o his son the gentle Bharat, thus the ancient monarch spoke :

Know, my son, the prince Kaikeya, Yudajit of warlike fame,
 Queen Kaikeyi's honoured brother, from his distant regions came,

He hath come to take thee, Bharat, to Kaikeya's monarch hold,
 o and stay with them a season, greet thy grandsire loved of old."

Bharat heard with filial duty and he hastened to obey,
 ook with him the young Satrugna in his grandsire's home to stay,

nd from Rama and from Lakshman parted they with many a tear,
 rom their young and gentle consorts, from their parents ever dear,

nd Kaikeya with the princes, with his guards and troopers gay,
 o his father's western regions gladsome held his onward way.

Rama with a pious duty,—favoured by the Gods above,—
 ended still his ancient father with a never-faltering love,

n his father's sacred mandate still his noblest Duty saw,
 n the weal of subject nations recognised his foremost Law !

nd he pleased his happy mother with a fond and filial care,
 nd his elders and his kinsmen with devotion soft and fair,

Brahmans blessed the righteous Rama for his faith in gods above,
People in the town and hamlet blessed him with their loyal love !

With a woman's whole affection fond and trusting Sita loved,
And within her faithful bosom loving Rama lived and moved,

And he loved her, for their parents chose her as his faithful wife,
Loved her for her peerless beauty, for her true and trustful life,

Loved and dwelt within her bosom though he wore a form apart,
Rama in a sweet communion lived in Sita's loving heart !

Days of joy and months of gladness o'er the gentle Sita flew,
As she like the QUEEN OF BEAUTY brighter in her graces grew,

And as VISHNU with his consort dwells in skies, alone, apart,
Rama in a sweet communion lived in Sita's loving heart !

BOOK II

VANA-GAMANA-ADESA

(The Banishment)

THE events narrated in this Book occupy scarcely two days. The description of Rama's princely virtues and the rejoicings at his proposed coronation, with which the Book begins, contrast with much dramatic force and effect with the dark intrigues which follow, and which end in his cruel banishment for fourteen years.

The portions translated in this Book form Sections i., ii., vi., and vii., portions of Sections x. to xiii., and the whole of Section xviii. of Book ii. of the original text.

I

The Council Convened

Thus the young and brave Satrughna, Bharat ever true and bold,
Went to warlike western regions where Kaikeyas lived of old,

Where the ancient Aswa-pati ruled his kingdom broad and fair,
Hailed the sons of Dasa-ratha with a grandsire's loving care.

Tended with a fond affection, guarded with a gentle sway,
Still the princes of their father dreamt and thought by night and day,

And their father in Ayodhya, great of heart and stout of hand,
Thought of Bharat and Satrughna living in Kaikeya's land

For his great and gallant princes were to him his life and light,
Were a part of Dasa-ratha like his hands and arms of might,

But of all his righteous children righteous Rama won his heart,
As SWAYAMBHU of all creatures, was his dearest, holiest part,

For his Rama strong and stately was his eldest and his best,
Void of every baser passion and with every virtue blest !

Soft in speech, gentle and peaceful, seeking still the holy path,
Calm in conscious worth and valour, taunt nor cavil waked his wrath

In the field of war excelling, boldest warrior midst the bold,
In the palace chambers musing on the tales by elders told,

Faithful to the wise and learned, truthful in his deed and word,
Rama dearly loved his people and his people loved their lord !

To the Brahmans pure and holy Rama due obeisance made,
To the poor and to the helpless deeper love and honour paid,

Spirit of his race and nation was to high-souled Rama given,
Thoughts that widen human glory, deeds that ope the gates of heav'n

Not intent on idle cavil Rama spake with purpose high,
And the God of speech might envy when he spake or made reply,

In the learning of the *Vedas* highest meed and glory won,
In the skill of arms the father scarcely matched the gallant son !

Taught by sages and by elders in the manners of his race,
Rama grew in social virtues and each soft endearing grace,

Taught by inborn pride and wisdom patient purpose to conceal,
Deep determined was his effort, dauntless was his silent will !

Peerless in his skill and valour steed and elephant to tame,
Dauntless leader of his forces, matchless in his warlike fame,

Higher thought and nobler duty did the righteous Rama move,
By his toil and by his virtues still he sought his people's love !

Dasa-ratha marked his Rama with each kingly virtue blest,
 and from life-long royal duties now he sought repose and rest :

Still I see my son anointed, seated on Kosala's throne,
 the evening of my life-time ere my days on earth be done,

all I place my ancient empire in the youthful Rama's care,
 seek for me a higher duty and prepare for life more fair ?"

tendering thus within his bosom counsel from his courtiers sought,
 and to crown his Rama, Regent, was his purpose and his thought,

nor strange signs and diverse tokens now appeared on earth and sky,
 and his failing strength and vigour spoke his end approaching nigh,

and he witnessed Rama's virtues filling all the world with love,
 as the full-moon's radiant lustre fills the earth from skies above !

Near to him appeared his purpose, Rama to his people dear,
 private wish and public duty made his path serene and clear,

Dasa-ratha called his Council, summoned chiefs from town and plain,
 welcomed too from distant regions monarchs and the kings of men,

mansions meet for prince and chieftain to his guests the monarch gave,
 gracious as the Lord of Creatures held the gathering rich and brave !

athless to Kosala's Council nor Videha's monarch came,
 nor the warlike chief Kaikeya, Aswa-pati king of fame,

nor those kings and near relations, ancient Dasa-ratha meant,
 message of the proud anointment with his greetings would be sent.

ightly dawned the day of gathering ; in the lofty Council Hall
 met the chiefs and ancient burghers came and mustered one and all,

and each prince and peer was seated on his cushion rich and high,
 and on monarch Dasa-ratha eager turned his anxious eye,

surrounded by crowned kings and chieftains, burghers from the town and plain,
 Dasa-ratha shone like INDRA girt by heaven's immortal train !

II

The People Consulted

With the voice of pealing thunder Dasa-ratha spake to all,
To the princes and the burghers gathered in Ayodhya's hall :

" Known to all, the race of Raghu rules this empire broad and fair,
And hath ever loved and cherished subjects with a father's care,

In my father's footsteps treading I have sought the ancient path,
Nursed my people as my children, free from passion, pride and wrath,

Underneath this white umbrella, seated on this royal throne,
I have toiled to win their welfare and my task is almost done !

Years have passed of fruitful labour, years of work by fortune blest,
And the evening of my life-time needs, my friends, the evening's rest,

Years have passed in watchful effort, Law and Duty to uphold,
Effort needing strength and prowess,—and my feeble limbs are old !

Peers and burghers, let your monarch, now his lifelong labour done,
For the weal of loving subjects on his empire seat his son,

INDRA-like in peerless valour, *rishi*-like in holy lore,
Rama follows Dasa-ratha, but in virtues stands before !

Throned in Pushya's constellation shines the moon with fuller light,
Throned to rule his father's empire Rama wins a loftier might,

He will be your gracious monarch favoured well by FORTUNE'S QUEEN,
By his virtues and his valour lord of earth he might have been !

Speak your thought and from this bosom lift a load of toil and care,
On the proud throne of my fathers let me place a peerless heir,

Speak your thought, my chiefs and people, if this purpose please you well,
Or if wiser, better counsel in your wisdom ye can tell,

Speak your thought without compulsion, though this plan to me be dear,
If some middle course were wiser, if some other way were clear !”

Gathered chieftains hailed the mandate with applauses long and loud,
As the peafowls hail the thunder of the dark and laden cloud,

And the gathered subjects echoed loud and long the welcome sound,
Till the voices of the people shook the sky and solid ground !

Brahmans versed in laws of duty, chieftains in their warlike pride,
Countless men from town and hamlet heard the mandate far and wide,

And they met in consultation, joyously with one accord,
Freely and in measured accents, gave their answer to their lord :

“ Years of toil and watchful labour weigh upon thee, king of men,
Young in years is righteous Rama, Heir and Regent let him reign,

We would see the princely Rama, Heir and Regent duly made,
Riding on the royal tusker in the white umbrella's shade !”

Searching still their secret purpose, seeking still their thought to know,
Spake again the ancient monarch in his measured words and slow :

“ I would know your inner feelings, loyal thoughts and whispers kind,
For a doubt within me lingers and a shadow clouds my mind,

True to Law and true to Duty while I rule this kingdom fair,
Wherefore would you see my Rama seated as the Regent Heir ?”

“ We would see him Heir and Regent, Dasa-ratha, ancient lord,
For his heart is blessed with valour, virtue marks his deed and word,

Lives not man in all the wide-earth who excels the saintless youth,
In his loyalty to Duty, in his love of righteous Truth,

Truth impels his thought and action, Truth inspires his soul with grace,
And his virtue fills the wide earth and exalts his ancient race !

Bright Immortals know his valour ; with his brother Lakshman bold
He hath never failed to conquer hostile town or castled hold,

And returning from his battles, from the duties of the war,
Riding on his royal tusker or his all-resistless car,

As a father to his children to his loving men he came,
Blessed our homes and maids and matrons till our infants lisped his name,

For our humble woes and troubles Rama hath the ready tear,
To our humble tales of suffering Rama lends his willing ear !

Happy is the royal father who hath such a righteous son,
For in town and mart and hamlet every heart hath Rama won,

Burghers and the toiling tillers tales of Rama's kindness say,
Man and infant, maid and matron, morn and eve for Rama pray,

To the Gods and bright Immortals we our inmost wishes send,
May the good and godlike Rama on his father's throne ascend,

Great in gifts and great in glory, Rama doth our homage own,
We would see the princely Rama seated on his father's throne !"

III

The City Decorated

With his consort pious Rama, pure in deed and pure in thought,
After evening's due ablutions NARAYANA'S chamber sought,

Prayed unto the Lord of Creatures, NARAYANA Ancient Sire,
Placed his offering on his forehead, poured it on the lighted fire,

Piously partook the remnant, sought for NARAYANA's aid,
As he kept his fast and vigils on the grass of *kusa* spread.

With her lord the saintly Sita silent passed the sacred night,
Contemplating World's Preserver, Lord of Heaven's ethereal height,

And within the sacred chamber on the grass of *kusa* lay,
Till the crimson streaks of morning ushered in the festive day,

Till the royal bards and minstrels chanted forth the morning call,
Pealing through the holy chamber, echoing through the royal hall.

Past the night of sacred vigils, in his silken robes arrayed,
Message of the proud anointment Rama to the Brahmans said,

And the Brahmans spake to burghers that the festive day was come,
Till the mart and crowded pathway rang with note of pipe and drum,

And the townsmen heard rejoicing of the vigils of the night,
Kept by Rama and by Sita for the day's auspicious rite.

Rama shall be Heir and Regent, Rama shall be crowned to-day,—
Rapid flew the gladdening message with the morning's gladsome ray,

And the people of the city, maid and matron, man and boy,
Decorated fair Ayodhya in their wild tumultuous joy!

On the temple's lofty steeple high as cloud above the air,
On the crossing of the pathways, in the garden green and fair,

On the merchant's ample warehouse, on the shop with stores displayed,
On the mansion of the noble by the cunning artist made,

On the gay and bright pavilion, on the high and shady trees,
Banners rose and glittering streamers, flags that fluttered in the breeze!

Actors gay and nimble dancers, singers skilled in lightsome song,
With their antics and their music pleased the gay and gathered throng,

And the people met in conclaves, spake of Rama, Regent Heir,
And the children by the road-side lisped of Rama brave and fair!

Women wove the scented garland, merry maids the censer lit,
Men with broom and sprinkled water swept the spacious mart and street,

Rows of trees and posts they planted hung with lamps for coming night,
That the midnight dark might rival splendour of the noonday light !

Troops of men and merry children laboured with a loving care,
Woman's skill and woman's fancy made the city passing fair,

So that good and kindly Rama might his people's toil approve,
So that sweet and soft-eyed Sita might accept her people's love !

Groups of joyous townsmen gathered in the square or lofty hall,
Praised the monarch Dasa-ratha, regent Rama young and tall :

" Great and good is Dasa-ratha born of Raghu's royal race,
In the fulness of his lifetime on his son he grants his grace,

And we hail the rite auspicious for our prince of peerless might,
He will guard us by his valour, he will save our cherished right,

Dear unto his loving brothers in his father's palace hall,
As is Rama to his brothers dear is Rama to us all,

Long live ancient Dasa-ratha king of Raghu's royal race,
We shall see his son anointed by his father's righteous grace !

Thus of Rama's consecration spake the burghers one and all,
And the men from distant hamlets poured within the city wall,

From the confines of the empire, north and south and west and east,
Came to see the consecration and to share the royal feast !

And the rolling tide of nations raised their voices loud and high,
Like the tide of sounding ocean when the full moon lights the sky,

And Ayodhya thronged by people from the hamlet, mart and lea,
Was tumultuous like the ocean thronged by creatures of the sea !

IV

Intrigue

In the inner palace chamber stood the proud and peerless queen,
With a mother's joy Kaikeyi gaily watched the festive scene,

But with deep and deadly hatred Manthara, her nurse and maid,
Marked the city bright with banners, and in scornful accents said :

"Take thy presents back, Kaikeyi, for they ill befit the day,
And when clouds of sorrow darken, ill beseems thee to be gay,

And thy folly moves my laughter though an anguish wakes my sigh,
For a gladness stirs thy bosom when thy greatest woe is nigh !

Who that hath a woman's wisdom, who that is a prudent wife,
Smiles in joy when prouder rival triumphs in the race of life,

How can hapless Queen Kaikeyi greet this deed of darkness done,
When the favoured Queen Kausalya wins the empire for her son ?

Know the truth, O witless woman ! Bharat is unmatched in fame,
Rama, deep and darkly jealous, dreads thy Bharat's rival claim,

Younger Lakshman with devotion doth on eldest Rama wait,
Young Satrugna with affection follows Bharat's lofty fate,

Rama dreads no rising danger from the twins, the youngest-born,
But thy Bharat's claims and virtues fill his jealous heart with scorn !

Trust me, queen, thy Bharat's merits are too well and widely known,
And he stands too near and closely by a rival brother's throne,

Rama hath a wolf-like wisdom and a fang to reach the foe.
And I tremble for thy Bharat, Heaven avert untimely woe !

Happy is the Queen Kausalya, they will soon anoint her son,
When on Pushya's constellation gaily rides to-morrow's moon,

Happy is the Queen Kausalya in her regal pomp and state,
And Kaikeyi like a bond-slave must upon her rival wait !

Wilt thou do her due obeisance as we humble women do,
Will thy proud and princely Bharat as his brother's henchman go,

Will thy Bharat's gentle consort, fairest princess in this land,
In her tears and in her anguish wait on Sita's proud command ? ”

With a woman's scornful anger Manthara proclaimed her grief,
With a mother's love for Rama thus Kaikeyi answered brief :

“ What inspires thee, wicked woman, thus to rail in bitter tone,
Shall not Rama, best and eldest, fill his father's royal throne,

What alarms thee, crooked woman, in the happy rites begun,
Shall not Rama guard his brothers as a father guards his son ?

And when Rama's reign is over, shall not Gods my Bharat speed,
And by law and ancient custom shall not younger son succeed,

In the present bliss of Rama and in Bharat's future hope,
What offends thee, senseless woman, wherefore dost thou idly mope ?

Dear is Rama as my Bharat, ever duteous in his ways,
Rama honours Queen Kausalya, loftier honour to me pays,

Rama's realm is Bharat's kingdom, ruling partners they shall prove,
For himself than for his brothers Rama owns no deeper love ! ”

Scorn and anger shook her person and her bosom heaved a sigh,
As in wilder, fiercer accents Manthara thus made reply :

“ What insensate rage or madness clouds thy heart and blinds thine eye,
Courting thus thy own disaster, courting danger dread and high,

What dark folly clouds thy vision to the workings of thy foe,
Heedless thus to seek destruction and to sink in gulf of woe ?

Know, fair queen, by law and custom, son ascends the throne of pride,
Rama's son succeedeth Rama, luckless Bharat steps aside,

Brothers do not share a kingdom, nor can one by one succeed,
Mighty were the civil discord if such custom were decreed !

For to stop all war and tumult, thus the ancient laws ordain,
Eldest son succeeds his father, younger children may not reign,

Bharat barred from Rama's empire, vainly decked with royal grace,
Friendless, joyless, long shall wander, alien from his land and race !

Thou hast borne the princely Bharat, nursed him from thy gentle breast,
To a queen and to a mother need a prince's claims be pressed,

To a thoughtless heedless mother must I Bharat's virtues plead,
Must the Queen Kaikeyi witness Queen Kausalya's son succeed ?

Trust thy old and faithful woman who hath nursed thee, youthful queen,
And in great and princely houses many darksome deeds hath seen,

Trust my word, the wily Rama for his spacious empire's good,
Soon will banish friendless Bharat and secure his peace with blood !

Thou hast sent the righteous Bharat to thy ancient father's land,
And Satrugghna young and valiant doth beside his brother stand,

Young in years and generous-hearted, they will grow in mutual love,
As the love of elder Rama doth in Lakshman's bosom move.

Young companions grow in friendship, and our ancient legends tell,
Weeds protect a forest monarch which the woodman's axe would fell,

Crowned Rama unto Lakshman will a loving brother prove,
But for Bharat and Satruggha, Rama's bosom owns no love,

And a danger thus ariseth if the elder wins the throne,
Haste thee, heedless Queen Kaikeyi, save the younger and thy son !

Speak thy mandate to thy husband, let thy Bharat rule at home,
In the deep and pathless jungle let the banished Rama roam,

This will please thy ancient father and thy father's kith and kin,
This will please the righteous people, Bharat knows no guile or sin !

Speak thy mandate to thy husband win thy son a happy fate,
Doom him not to Rama's service or his unrelenting hate,

Let not Rama in his rancour shed a younger brother's blood,
As the lion slays the tiger in the deep and echoing wood !

With the magic of thy beauty thou hast won thy monarch's heart,
Queen Kausalya's bosom rankles with a woman's secret smart,

Let her not with woman's vengeance turn upon her prouder foe,
And as crownéd Rama's mother venge her in Kaikeyi's woe,

Mark my word, my child Kaikeyi, much these ancient eyes have seen,
Rama's rule is death to Bharat, insult to my honoured queen !"

Like a slow but deadly poison worked the ancient nurse's tears,
And a wife's undying impulse mingled with a mother's fears,

Deep within Kaikeyi's bosom worked a woman's jealous thought,
Speechless in her secret and anger mourner's dark retreat she sought.

V

The Queen's Demand

Rama shall be crowned at sunrise, so did royal bards proclaim,
Every rite arranged and ordered, Dasa-ratha homeward came, .

To the fairest of his consorts, dearest to his ancient heart,
Came the king with eager gladness joyful message to impart,

Radiant as the Lord of Midnight, ere the eclipse casts its gloom,
Came the old and ardent monarch heedless of his darksome doom !

Through the shady palace garden where the peacock wandered free,
Lute and lyre poured forth their music, parrot flew from tree to tree,

Through the corridor of creepers, painted rooms by artists done,
And the halls where scented *Champak* and the flaming *Asok* shone,

Through the portico of splendour graced by silver, tusk and gold,
Radiant with his thought of gladness walked the monarch proud and
bold,

Through the lines of scented blossoms which by limpid waters shone,
And the rooms with seats of silver, ivory bench and golden throne,

Through the chamber of confection, where each viand wooed the taste,
Every object in profusion as in regions of the blest,

Through Kaikeyi's inner closet lighted with a softened sheen,
Walked the king with eager longing, —but Kaikeyi was not seen !

Thoughts of love and gentle dalliance woke within his ancient heart,
And the magic of her beauty and the glamour of her art,

With a soft desire the monarch vainly searched the vanished fair,
Found her not in royal chamber, found her not in gay parterre !

Filled with love and longing languor loitered not the radiant queen,
In her soft voluptuous chamber, in the garden, grove or green,

And he asked the faithful warder of Kaikeyi loved and lost,
She who served him with devotion and his wishes never crost,

Spoke the warder in his terror that the queen with rage distraught,
Weeping silent tears of anguish had the mourner's chamber sought !

Thither flew the stricken monarch ; on the bare and unswept ground,
Trembling with tumultuous passion was the Queen Kaikeyi found,

On the cold uncovered pavement sorrowing lay the weeping wife,
Young wife of an ancient husband, dearer than his heart and life !

Like a bright and blossoming creeper rudely severed from the earth,
Like a fallen fair *Apsara*, beauteous nymph of heavenly birth,

Like a female forest-ranger bleeding from the hunter's dart,
Whom her mate the forest-monarch soothes with soft endearing art,

Lay the queen in tears of anguish! And with sweet and gentle word
To the lotus-eyed lady softly spake her loving lord !

" Wherefore thus, my Queen and Empress, sorrow-laden is thy heart,
Who with daring slight or insult seeks to cause thy bosom smart ?

If some unknown ailment pains thee, evil spirit of the air,
Skilled physicians wait upon thee, priests with incantations fair,

If from human foe some insult, wipe thy tears and doom his fate,
Rich reward or royal vengeance shall upon thy mandate wait !

Wilt thou doom to death the guiltless, free whom direst sins debase,
Wilt thou lift the poor and lowly or the proud and great disgrace,

Speak, and I and all my courtiers Queen Kaikeyi's best obey,
For thy might is boundless, Empress, limitless thy regal sway !

Rolls my chariot-wheel revolving from the sea to farthest sea,
And the wide earth is my empire, monarchs list my proud decree,

Nations of the eastern regions and of Sindhu's western wave,
Brave Saurashtras and the races who the ocean's dangers brave,

Vangas, Angas and Magadhas, warlike Matsyas of the west,
Kasis and the southern races, brave Kosalas first and best,

Nations of my world-wide empire, rich in corn and sheep and kine,
All shall serve my Queen Kaikeyi and their treasures all are thine,

Speak, command thy king's obedience, and thy wrath will melt away,
Like the melting snow of winter 'neath the sun's reviving ray ! "

Blinded was the ancient husband as he lifted up her head,
Heedless oath and word he plighted that her wish should be obeyed,

Scheming for a fatal purpose, inly then Kaikeyi smiled,
And by sacred oath and promise bound the monarch love-beguiled :

"Thou hast given, Dasa-ratha, truth and word and royal oath,
Three and thirty Gods be witness, watchers of the righteous truth,

Sun and Moon and Stars be witness, Sky and Day and sable Night,
Rolling Worlds and this our wide Earth, and each dark and unseen wight,

Witness Rangers of the forest, Household Gods that guard us both,
Mortal beings and Immortal,—witness ye the monarch's oath,

Ever faithful to his promise, ever truthful in his word,
Dasa-ratha grants my prayer, Spirits and the Gods have heard !

Call to mind, O righteous monarch, days when in a bygone strife,
Warring with thy foes immortal thou hadst almost lost thy life,

With a woman's loving tendance poor Kaikeyi cured thy wound,
'Till from death and danger rescued, thou wert by a promise bound,

Two rewards my husband offered, what my loving heart might seek,
Long delayed their wished fulfilment,—now let poor Kaikeyi speak,

And if royal deeds redeem not what thy royal lips did say,
Victim to thy broken promise Queen Kaikeyi dies to-day !

*By these rites ordained for Rama,—such the news my menials bring,—
Let my Bharat, and not Rama, be anointed Regent King,*

*Wearing skins and matted tresses, in the cave or hermit's cell,
Fourteen years in Dandak's forest let the elder Rama dwell,*

*These are Queen Kaikeyi's wishes, these are boons for which I pray,
I would see my son anointed, Rama banished on this day !"*

VI

The King's Lament

"Is this torturing dream or madness, do my feeble senses fail,
O'er my darkened mind and bosom doth a fainting fit prevail?"

So the stricken monarch pondered and in hushed and silent fear,
Looked on her as on a tigress looks the dazed and stricken deer,

Lying on the unswept pavement still he heaved the choking sigh,
Like a wild and hissing serpent quelled by incantations high!

Sobs convulsive shook his bosom and his speech and accent failed,
And a dark and deathlike faintness o'er his feeble soul prevailed,

Stunned awhile remained the monarch, then in furious passion woke,
And his eyeballs flamed with redfire, to the queen as thus he spoke:

"Traitor to thy king and husband, fell destroyer of thy race,
Wherefore seeks thy ruthless rancour Rama rich in righteous grace,

Traitor to thy kith and kindred, Rama loves thee as thy own,
Wherefore then with causeless vengeance as a mother hate thy son?

Have I courted thee, Kaikeyi, throned thee in my heart of truth,
Nursed thee in my home and bosom like a snake of poisoned tooth,

Have I courted thee, Kaikeyi, placed thee on Ayodha's throne,
That my Rama, loved of people, thou shouldst banish from his own?

Banish far my Queen Kausalya, Queen Sumitra saintly wife,
Wrench from me my ancient empire, from my bosom wrench my life,

But with brave and princely Rama never can his father part,
Till his ancient life is ended, cold and still his beating heart!

Sunless roll the world in darkness, rainless may be harvests thrive,
But from righteous Rama severed, never can his sire survive,

Feeble is thy aged husband, few and brief on earth his day,
Lend me, wife, a woman's kindness, as a consort be my stay !

Ask for other boon, Kaikeyi, aught my sea-girt empire yields,
Wealth or treasure, gem or jewel, castled town or smiling fields,

Ask for other gift, Kaikeyi, and thy wishes shall be given,
Stain me not with crime unholy in the eye of righteous Heaven ! "

Coldly spake the Queen Kaikeyi : " If thy royal heart repent,
Break thy word and plighted promise, let thy royal faith be rent,

Ever known for truth and virtue, speak to peers and monarchs all,
When from near and distant regions they shall gather in thy hall,

Speak if so it please thee, monarch, of thy evil-destined wife,
How she loved with wife's devotion, how she served and saved thy life,

How on plighted promise trusting for a humble boon she sighed,
How a monarch broke his promise, how a cheated woman died ! "

" Fair thy form," resumed the monarch, " beauty dwells upon thy face,
Woman's winsome charms bedeck thee, and a woman's peerless grace,

Wherefore then within thy bosom wakes this thought of cruel wile,
And what dark and loathsome spirit stains thy heart with blackest guile ?

Ever since the day, Kaikeyi, when a gentle bride you came,
By a wife's unflinching duty you have won a woman's fame,

Wherefore now this cruel purpose hath a stainless heart defiled,
Ruthless wish to send my Rama to the dark and pathless wild ?

Wherefore, darkly-scheming woman, on unrighteous purpose bent,
Doth thy cruel causeless vengeance on my Rama seek a vent,

Wherefore seek by deeds unholy for thy son the throne to win,
Throne which Bharat doth not covet—blackened by his mother's sin?

Shall I see my banished Rama mantled in the garb of woe,
Reft of home and kin and empire to the pathless jungle go,

Shall I see disasters sweeping o'er my empire dark and deep,
As the forces of a foeman o'er a scattered army sweep?

Shall I hear assembled monarchs in their whispered voices say,
Weak and foolish in his dotage, Dasa-ratha holds his sway,

Shall I say to righteous elders when they blame my action done,
That by woman's mandate driven I have banished thus my son?

Queen Kausalya, dear-loved woman! she who serves me as a slave,
Soothes me like a tender sister, helps me like a consort brave,

As a fond and loving mother tends me with a watchful care,
As a daughter ever duteous doth obeisance sweet and fair,

When my fond and fair Kausalya asks me of her banished son,
How shall Dasa-ratha answer for the impious action done,

How can husband, cold and cruel, break a wife's confiding heart,
How can father, false and faithless, from his best and eldest part?"

Coldly spake the Queen Kaikeyi: "If thy royal heart repent,
Break thy word and plighted promise, let thy royal faith be rent,

Truth-abiding is our monarch, so I heard the people say,
And his word is all inviolate, stainless virtue marks his sway,

Let it now be known to nations,—righteous Dasa-ratha lied,
And a trusting, cheated woman broke her loving heart and died!"

Darker grew the shades of midnight, coldly shone each distant star,
Wilder in the monarch's bosom raged the struggle and the war:

"Starry midnight, robed in shadows! give my wearied heart relief,
Spread thy sable covering mantle o'er an impious monarch's grief,

Spread thy vast and inky darkness o'er a deed of nameless crime,
Reign perennial o'er my sorrows heedless of the lapse of time,

May a sinful monarch perish ere the dawning of the day,
O'er a dark life sin-polluted, beam not morning's righteous ray!"

VII

The Sentence

Morning came and duteous Rama to the palace bent his way,
For to make his salutation and his due obeisance pay,

And he saw his aged father shorn of kingly pomp and pride,
And he saw the Queen Kaikeyi sitting by her consort's side.

Duteously the righteous Rama touched the ancient monarch's feet,
Touched the feet of Queen Kaikeyi with a son's obeisance meet,

"Rama!" cried the feeble monarch, but the tear bedimmed his eye,
Sorrow choked his failing utterance and his bosom heaved a sigh,

Rama started in his terror at his father's grief or wrath,
Like a traveller in the jungle crossed by serpent in his path!

Left of sense appeared the monarch, crushed beneath a load of pain,
Heaving oft a sigh of sorrow as his heart would break in twain,

Like the ocean tempest-shaken, like the sun in eclipse pale,
Like a crushed repenting *rishi* when his truth and virtue fail!

Breathless mused the anxious Rama,—what foul action hath he done;
What strange anger fills his father, wherefore greets he not his son?

"Speak, my mother," uttered Rama, "what strange error on my part;
Unremembered sin or folly fills with grief my father's heart,

Gracious unto me is father with a father's boundless grace,
Wherefore, clouds his altered visage, wherefore tears bedew his face?

Doth a piercing painful ailment rack his limbs with cruel smart,
Doth some secret silent anguish wring his torn and tortured heart,

Bharat lives with brave Satrughna in thy father's realms afar,
Hath some cloud of dark disaster crossed their bright auspicious star ?

Duteously the royal consorts on the loving monarch wait,
Hath some woe or dire misfortune dimmed the lustre of their fate,

I would yield my life and fortune ere I wound my father's heart,
Hath my unknown crime or folly caused his ancient bosom smart ?

Ever dear is Queen Kaikeyi to her consort and her king,
Hath some angry accent escaped thee thus his royal heart to wring,

Speak, my ever-loving mother, speak the truth for thou must know,
What distress or deep disaster pains his heart and clouds his brow ?”

Mother's love nor woman's pity moved the deep-determined queen,
As in cold and cruel accents thus she spake her purpose keen :

“ Grief nor woe nor sudden ailment pains thy father loved of old,
But he fears to speak his purpose to his Rama true and bold,

And his loving accents falter some unloving wish to tell,
Till you give your princely promise, you will serve his mandate well !

Listen more, in bygone seasons,—Rama thou wert then unborn,—
I had saved thy royal father, he a gracious boon had sworn,

But his feeble heart repenting is by pride and passion stirred,
He would break his royal promise as a caitiff breaks his word,

Years have passed and now the monarch would his ancient word forego,
He would build a needless causeway when the waters ceased to flow !

Truth inspires each deed attempted and each word by monarchs spoke,
Not for thee, though loved and honoured, should a royal vow be broke,

If the true and righteous Rama binds him by his father's vow ;
I will tell thee of the anguish which obscures his royal brow,

If thy feeble bosom falter and thy halting purpose fail,
Unredeemed is royal promise and unspoken is my tale !”

“ Speak thy word,” exclaimed the hero, “ and my purpose shall not fail,
Rama serves his father’s mandate and his bosom shall not quail,

Poisoned cup or death untimely,—what the cruel fates decree,—
To his king and to his father Rama yields obedience free,

Speak my father’s royal promise, hold me by his promise tied,
Rama speaks and shall not palter, for his lips have never lied.”

Cold and clear Kaikeyi’s accents fell as falls the hunter’s knife,
“ Listen then to word of promise and redeem it with thy life,

Wounded erst by foes immortal, saved by Queen Kaikeyi’s care,
Two great boons your father plighted and his royal words were fair,

I have sought their due fulfilment,—brightly shines my Bharat’s star,—
Bharat shall be Heir and Regent, Rama shall be banished far !

*If thy father’s royal mandate thou wouldst list and honour still,
Fourteen years in Dandak’s forest live and wander at thy will,*

*Seven long years and seven, my Rama, thou shalt in the jungle dwell,
Bark of trees shall be thy raiment and thy home the hermit’s cell,*

*Over fair Kosala’s empire let my princely Bharat reign,
With his cars and steeds and tuskers, wealth and gold and armed men !*

Tender-hearted is the monarch, age and sorrow dim his eye,
And the anguish of a father checks his speech and purpose high,

For the love he bears thee, Rama, cruel vow he may not speak,
I have spoke his will and mandate, and thy true obedience seek,

Calmly Rama heard the mandate, grief nor anger touched his heart,
Calmly from his father’s empire and his home prepared to part.

BOOK III

DASA-RATHA-VIYOGA

(*The Death of the King*)

THE first six days of Rama's wanderings are narrated in this Book. Sita and the faithful Lakshman accompanied Rama in his exile, and the royal people of Ayodhya followed their exiled prince as far as the banks of the Tamasa river where they halted on the first night. Rama had to steal away at night to escape the citizens, and his wanderings during the following days give us beautiful glimpses of forest life in holy hermitages. Thirty centuries have passed since the age of the Kosalas and Videhas, but every step of the supposed journey of Rama is well known in India to this day, and is annually traversed by thousands of devoted pilgrims. The past is not dead and buried in India, it lives in the hearts of millions of faithful men and faithful women, and shall live for ever.

On the third day of their exile, Rama and his wife and brother crossed the Ganges; on the fourth day they came to the hermitage of Bharad-vaja, which stood where Allahabad now stands, on the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna; on the fifth day they crossed the Jumna, the southern shores of which were then covered with woods; and on the sixth day they came to the hill of Chitrakuta, where they met the saint Valmiki, the reputed author of this Epic. "We have often looked," says a writer in *Calcutta Review*, vol. xxii, "on that green hill: it is the holiest spot of that sect of the Hindu faith who devote themselves to this incarnation of Vishnu. The whole neighbourhood is Rama's country. Every headland has some legend, every cavern is connected with his name, some of the wild fruits are still called Sita-phal, being the reputed food of the exile. Thousands and thousands annually visit the spot, and round the hill is raised a

footpath on which the devotee, with naked feet, treads full of pious awe."

Grief for the banished Rama pressed on the ancient heart of Dasaratha. The feeble old king pined away and died, remembering and recounting on his death-bed how in his youth he had caused sorrow and death to an old hermit by killing his son. Scarcely any passage in the Epic is more touching than this old sad story told by the dying monarch.

The portions translated in the Book form the whole or the main portions of Sections xxvi., xxvii., xxxi., xxxix., xl, xvli., lii., liv., lvi., lxiii, and lxiv. of Book ii. of the original text.

I

Woman's Love

"Dearly loved, devoted Sita ! daughter of a royal line,
Part we now, for years of wand'ring in the pathless woods is mine,

For my father, promise-fettered, to Kaikeyi yields the sway,
And she wills her son anointed,—fourteen years doth Rama stray,

But before I leave thee, Sita, in the wilderness to rove,
Yield me one more tender token of thy true and trustful love !

Serve my crownéd brother, Sita, as a faithful, duteous dame,
Tell him not of Rama's virtues, tell him not of Rama's claim,

Since my royal father willeth,—Bharat shall be regent-heir,
Serve him with a loyal duty, serve him with obeisance fair,

Since my royal father willeth,—years of banishment be mine,
Brave in sorrow and in suffering, woman's brightest fame be thine !

Keep thy fasts and vigils, Sita, while thy Rama is away,
Faith in Gods and faith in virtue on thy bosom hold their sway,

In the early watch of morning to the Gods for blessings pray,
To my father Dasa-ratha honour and obeisance pay,

To my mother, Queen Kausalya, is thy dearest tendance due,
Offer her thy consolation, be a daughter fond and true !

Queen Kaikeyi and Sumitra equal love and honour claim,
With a soothing soft endearment sweetly serve each royal dame,

Cherish Bharat and Sātrughna with a sister's watchful love,
And a mother's true affection and a mother's kindness prove !

Listen, Sita, unto Bharat speak no heedless angry word,
He is monarch of Kosala and of Raghu's race is lord,

Crowned kings our willing service and our faithful duty own,
Dearest sons they disinherit, cherish strangers near the throne !

Bharat's will with deep devotion and with faultless faith obey,
Truth and virtue on thy bosom ever hold their gentle sway,

And to please each dear relation, gentle Sita, be it thine,
Part we love ! for years of wand'ring in the pathless woods is mine !"

Rama spake, and soft-eyed Sita, ever sweet in speech and word,
Stirred by loving woman's passion boldly answered thus her lord :

" Do I hear my husband rightly, are these words my Rama spake,
And her banished lord and husband will the wedded wife forsake ?

Lightly I dismiss the counsel which my lord hath lightly said,
For it ill beseems a warrior and my husband's princely grade !

*For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord may lead,
In the banishment of Rama, Sita's exile is decreed,*

*Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state,
With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her fate,*

*If the righteous son of Raghu wends to forests dark and drear,
Sita steps before her husband wild and thorny paths to clear !*

Like the tasted refuse water cast thy timid thoughts aside,
Take me to the pathless jungle, bid me by my lord abide,

Car and steed and gilded palace, vain are these to woman's life,
Dearer is her husband's shadow to the loved and loving wife !

For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,

As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life !

Therefore bid me seek the jungle and in pathless forests roam,
Where the wild deer freely ranges and the tiger makes his home,

Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will Sita rove,
Waste no thought on home or kindred, nestling in her husband's love !

World-renowned is Rama's valour, fearless by her Rama's side,
Sita still will live and wander with a faithful woman's pride,

And the wild fruit she will gather from the fresh and fragrant wood,
And the food by Rama tasted shall be Sita's cherished food !

Bid me seek the sylvan greenwoods, wooded hills and plateaus high,
Limpid rills and crystal nullas as they softly ripple by,

And where in the lake of lotus tuneful ducks their plumage lave,
Let me with my loving Rama skim the cool translucent wave !

Years will pass in happy union,—happiest lot to woman given,—
Sita seeks not throne or empire, nor the brighter joys of heaven,

Heaven conceals not brighter mansions in its sunny fields of pride,
Where without her lord and husband faithful Sita would reside,

Therefore let me seek the jungle where the jungle-rangers rove,
Dearer than the royal palace, where I share my husband's love,

And my heart in sweet communion shall my Rama's wishes share,
And my wifely toil shall lighten Rama's load of woe and care !"

Vainly gentle Rama pleaded dangers of the jungle life,
Vainly spake of toil and trial to a true and tender wife !

II

Brother's Faithfulness

Tears bedewed the face of Lakshman as he heard what Sita said,
And he touched the feet of Rama and in gentle accents prayed :

*" If my elder and his lady to the pathless forests wend,
Armed with bow and ample quiver Lakshman will on them attend,*

*Where the wild deer range the forest and the lordly tuskers roam,
And the bird of gorgeous plumage nestles in its jungle home,*

*Dearer far to me those woodlands where my elder Rama dwells,
Than the homes of bright Immortals where perennial bliss prevails !"*

Grant me then thy sweet permission,—faithful to thy glorious star,
Lakshman shall not wait and tarry when his Rama wanders far,

Grant me then thy loving mandate,—Lakshman hath no wish to stay,
None shall bar the faithful younger when the elder leads the way !"

" Ever true to deeds of virtue, duteous brother, faithful friend,
Dearer than his life to Rama, thou shalt not to forests wend,

Who shall stay by Queen Kausalya, Lakshman, if we both depart,
Who shall stay by Queen Sumitra, she who nursed thee on her heart ?

For the king our aged father, he who ruled the earth and main,
Is a captive to Kaikeyi, fettered by her silken chain,

Little help Kaikeyi renders to our mothers in her pride,
Little help can Bharat offer, standing by his mother's side.

Thou alone can'st serve Kausalya when for distant woods I part,
When the memory of my exile rankles in her sorrowing heart,

Thou alone can'st serve Sumitra, soothe her sorrows with thy love,
Stay by them, my faithful Lakshman, and thy filial virtues prove,

Be this then thy sacred duty, tend our mothers in their woe,
Little joy or consolation have they left on earth below !"

Spake the hero : " Fear no evil, well is Rama's prowess known,
And to mighty Rama's mother Bharat will obeisance own,

Nathless if the pride of empire sways him from the righteous path,
Blood will venge the offered insult and will quench our filial wrath !

But a thousand peopled hamlets Queen Kausalya's hests obey,
And a thousand armed champions own her high and queenly sway,

Aye, a thousand village-centres Queen Sumitra's state maintain,
And a thousand swords like Lakshman's guard her proud and prosperous reign !

All alone with gentle Sita thou shalt track thy darksome way,
Grant it, that thy faithful Lakshman shall protect her night and day,

Grant it, with his bow and quiver Lakshman shall the forests roam,
And his axe shall fell the jungle, and his hands shall rear the home !

Grant it, in the deepest woodlands he shall seek the forest fruit,
Berries dear to holy hermits and the sweet and luscious root,

And when with thy meek-eyed Sita thou shalt seek the mountain crest,
Grant it, Lakshman ever duteous watch and guard thy nightly rest !"

Words of brother's deep devotion Rama heard with grateful heart,
And with Sita and with Lakshman for the woods prepared to part ;

"Part we then from loving kinsmen, arms and mighty weapons bring,
Bows of war which Lord VARUNA rendered to Videha's king,

Coats of mail to sword impervious, quivers which can never fail,
And the rapiers bright as sunshine, golden-hilted, tempered well,

Safely rest these goodly weapons in our great preceptor's hall,
Seek and bring them, faithful brother, for methinks we need them all!"

Rama spake; his valiant brother then the wondrous weapons brought,
Wreathed with fresh and fragrant garlands and with gold and jewels
wrought,

"Welcome, brother," uttered Rama, "stronger thus to woods we go,
Wealth and gold and useless treasure to the holy priests bestow,

To the son of saint Vasistha, to each sage is honour due,
Then we leave our father's mansions, to our father's mandate true!"

III

Mother's Blessings

Tears of sorrow and of suffering flowed from Queen Kausalya's eye,
As she saw departing Sita for her blessings drawing nigh,

And she clasped the gentle Sita and she kissed her moistened head,
And her tears like summer tempest choked the loving words she said:

"Part we, dear devoted daughter, to thy husband ever true,
With a woman's whole affection render love to husband's due!

False are women loved and cherished, gentle in their speech and word,
When misfortune's shadows gather, who are faithless to their lord,

Who through years of sunny splendour smile and pass the livelong day,
When misfortune's darkness thickens, from their husband turn away,"

Who with changeful fortune changing oft ignore the plighted word,
And forget a woman's duty, woman's faith to wedded lord,

Who to holy love inconstant from their wedded consort part,
Manly deed nor manly virtue wins the changeful woman's heart !

But the true and righteous woman, loving spouse and changeless wife,
Faithful to her lord and consort holds him dearer than her life,

Ever true and righteous Sita, follow still my godlike son,
Like a God to thee is Rama in the woods or on the throne !"

" I shall do my duty mother," said the wife with wifely pride,
" Like a God to me is Rama, Sita shall not leave his side,

From the Moon will part his lustre ere I part from wedded lord,
Ere from faithful wife's devotion falter in my deed or word,

For the stringless lute is silent, idle is the wheel-less car,
And no wife the loveless consort, inauspicious is her star !

Small the measure of affection which the sire and brother prove,
Measureless to wedded woman is her lord and husband's love,

True to Law and true to Scriptures, true to woman's plighted word,
Can I ever be, my mother, faithless, loveless to my lord ?"

Tears of joy and mingled sorrow filled the Queen Kausalya's eye,
As she marked the faithful Sita true in heart, in virtue high,

And she wept the tears of sadness when with sweet obeisance due,
Spake with hands in meekness folded Rama ever good and true :

" Sorrow not, my loving mother, trust in virtue's changeless beam,
Swift will fly the years of exile like a brief and transient dream,

Girt by faithful friends and forces, blest by righteous Gods above,
Thou shalt see thy son returning to thy bosom and thy love !"

Unto all the royal ladies Rama his obeisance paid,
For his failings unremembered, blessings and forgiveness prayed,

And his words were soft and gentle, and they wept to see him go,
Like the piercing cry of curlew rose the piercing voice of woe,

And in halls where drum and tabor rose in joy and regal pride,
Voice of grief and lamentation sounded far and sounded wide !

Then the true and faithful Lakshman parted from each weeping dame,
And to sorrowing Queen Sumitra with his due obeisance came,

And he bowed to Queen Sumitra and his mother kissed his head,
Stilled her anguish-laden bosom and in trembling accents said :

"Dear devoted duteous Lakshman, ever to thy elder true,
When thy elder wends to forest, forest-life to thee is due,

Thou hast served him true and faithful in his glory and his fame,
This is Law for true and righteous,—serve him in his woe and shame,

This is Law for race of Raghu known on earth for holy might,
Bounteous in their sacred duty, brave and warlike in the fight !

Therefore tend him as thy father, as thy mother tend his wife,
And to thee, like fair Ayodhya be thy humble forest life,

Go, my son, the voice of Duty bids my gallant Lakshman go,
Serve thy elder with devotion and with valour meet thy foe !"

IV

Citizens' Lament

Spake Sumantra chariot-driver waiting by the royal car,
"Haste thee, mighty-destined Rama, for we wander long and far,

Fourteen years in Dandak's forest shall the righteous Rama stray,
Such is Dasa-ratha's mandate, haste thee Rama and obey."

Queenly Sita bright-apparelled, with a strong and trusting heart,
Mounted on the car of splendour for the pathless woods to part,

And the king for needs providing gave her robes and precious store,
For the many years of exile in a far and unknown shore,

And a wealth of warlike weapons to the exiled princes gave,
Bow and dart and linked armour, sword and shield and lances brave,

Then the gallant brothers mounted on the gold-emblazoned car,
For unending was the journey and the wilderness was far,

Skilled Sumantra saw them seated, urged the swiftly-flying steed,
Faster than the speed of tempest was the noble coursers' speed.

And they parted for the forest ; like a long unending night,
Gloomy shades of grief and sadness deepened on the city's might,

Mute and dumb but conscious creatures felt the woe the city bore,
Horses neighed and shook their bright bells, elephants return a roar

Man and boy and maid and matron followed Rama with their eye,
As the thirsty seek the water when the parched fields are dry,

Clinging to the rapid chariot, by its side, before, behind,
Thronging men and wailing women wept for Rama good and kind :

" Draw the reins, benign Sumantra, slowly drive the royal car,
We would once more see our Rama banished long and banished far,

Iron-hearted is Kausalya from her Rama thus to part,
Rends it not her mother's bosom thus to see her son depart ?

True is righteous-hearted Sita cleaving to her husband still,
As the ever present sunlight cleaves to Meru's golden hill,

Faithful and heroic Lakshman ! thou hast by thy brother stood,
And in duty still unchanging thou hast sought the pathless wood,

Fixed in purpose, true in valour, mighty boon to thee is given,
And the narrow path thou chooseth is the righteous path to heaven ! "

Thus they spake in tears and anguish as they followed him apace,
And their eyes were fixed on Rama, pride of Rāghu's royal race,

Meanwhile ancient Dasa-ratha from his palace chamber came,
With each weeping queen and consort, with each woe-distracted dame !

And around the aged monarch rose the piercing voice of pain,
Like the wail of forest creatures when the forest-king is slain,

And the faint and feeble monarch was with age and anguish pale,
Like the darkened moon at eclipse when his light and radiance fail !

Rama saw his ancient father with a faltering footstep go,
Used to royal pomp and splendour, stricken now by age and woe,

Saw his mother faint and feeble to the speeding chariot hie,
As the mother-cow returneth to her young that loiters by,

Still she hastened to the chariot, " Rama ! Rama ! " was her cry,
And a throb was in her bosom and a tear was in her eye !

" Speed, Sumantra," uttered Rama, " from this torture let me part,
Speed, my friend, this sight of sadness breaks a much-enduring heart,

Heed not Dasa-ratha's mandate, stop not for the royal train,
Parting slow is lengthened sorrow like the sinner's lengthened pain !

Sad Sumantra urged the coursers and the rapid chariot flew,
And the royal chiefs and courtiers round their fainting monarch drew,

And they spake to Dasa-ratha : " Follow not thy banished son,
He whom thou wouldst keep beside thee comes not till his task is done "

Dassa-ratha, faint and feeble, listened to these words of pain,
Stood and saw his son departing,—saw him not on earth again !

V

Crossing the Tamasa : the Citizens' Return

Evening's thickening shades descended on 'Tamasa's distant shore,
Rama rested by the river, day of toilsome journey o'er,

And Ayodhya's loving people by the limpid river lay,
Sad and sorrowing they had followed Rama's chariot through the day !

" Soft-eyed Sita, faithful Lakshman," thus the gentle Rama said,
" Hail the first night of our exile mantling us in welcome shade,

Weeps the lone and voiceless forest, and in darksome lair and nest,
Feathered bird and forest creature seek their midnight's wonted rest,

Weeps methinks our fair Ayodhya to her Rama ever dear,
And perchance her men and women shed for us a silent tear,

Loyal men and faithful women, they have loved their ancient king,
And his anguish and our exile will their gentle bosoms wring !

Most I sorrow for my father and my mother loved and lost,
Stricken by untimely anguish, by a cruel fortune crost,

But the good and righteous Bharat gently will my parents tend,
And with fond and filial duty tender consolation lend,

Well I know his stainless bosom and his virtues rare and high,
He will soothe our parents' sorrow and their trickling tear will dry !

Faithful Lakshman, thou hast nobly stood by us when sorrows fell,
Guard my Sita by thy valour, by thy virtues tend her well,

Vain on her while from this river Rama seeks his thirst to slake,
On this first night of his exile food nor fruit shall Rama take,

Thou Sumantra, tend the horses, darkness comes with close of day,
Weary was the endless journey, weary is our onward way !"

Store of grass and welcome fodder to the steeds the driver gave,
Gave them rest and gave them water from Tamasa's limpid wave,

And performing night's devotions, for the princes made their bed,
By the softly rippling river 'neath the tree's umbrageous shade.

On a bed of leaf and verdure Rama and his Sita slept,
Faithful Lakshman with Sumantra nightly watch and vigils kept,

And the stars their silent lustre on the weary exiles shed,
And on wood and rolling river night her darksome mantle spread.

Early woke the righteous Rama and to watchful Lakshman spake :
" Mark the slumb'ring city people, still their nightly rest they take,

They have left their homes and children, followed us with loyal heart,
They would take us to Ayodhya, from their princes loth to part !

Speed, my brother, for the people wake not till the morning's star,
Speed by night the silent chariot, we may travel fast and far,

So my true and loving people see us not by dawn of day,
Follow not through wood and jungle Rama in his onward way,

For a monarch meek in suffering should his burden bravely bear,
And his true and faithful people may not ask his woe to share !"

Lakshman heard the gentle mandate, and Sumantra yoked the steed,
Fresh with rest and grateful fodder matchless in their wondrous speed,

Rama with his gentle consort and with Lakshman true and brave,
Crossed beneath the silent starlight dark Tamasa's limpid wave.

On the further bank a pathway, fair to view and far and wide,
Stretching onwards to the forests spanned the spacious country side,

" Leave the broad and open pathway," so the gentle Rama said,
" Follow yet a track diverging, so the people be misled,

'Then returning to the pathway we shall march ere break of day,
So our true and faithful people shall not know our southward way."

Wise Sumantra hastened northward, then returning to the road,
By his master and his consort and the valiant Lakshman stood,

Raghu's sons and gentle Sita mounted on the stately car,
And Sumantra drove the coursers travelling fast and travelling far.

Morning dawned, the waking people by Tamasa's limpid wave,
Saw not Rama and his consort, saw not Lakshman young and brave,

And the tear suffused their faces and their hearts with anguish burned,
Sorrow-laden and lamenting to their cheerless homes returned.

VI

Crossing the Ganges. Bharad-vaja's Hermitage

Morning dawned, and far they wandered, by their people loved and lost,
Drove through grove and flowering woodland, rippling rill and river crost,

Crossed the sacred Vedasruti on their still unending way,
Crossed the deep and rapid Gumti where the herds of cattle stray,

All the toilsome day they travelled, evening fell o'er wood and lea,
And they came where sea-like Ganga rolls in regal majesty,

'Neath a tall Ingudi's shadow by the river's zephyrs blest,
Second night of Rama's exile passed in sleep and gentle rest.

Morning dawned, the royal chariot Rama would no further own,
Sent Sumantra and the coursers back to fair Ayodhya's town,

Doffing then their royal garments Rama and his brother bold
Coats of bark and matted tresses wore like anchorites of old.

Buha, chief of wild Nishadas, boat and needed succour gave,
And the princes and fair Sita ventured on the sacred wave,

And by royal Rama bidden strong Nishadas plied the oar,
And the strong boat quickly bounding left fair Ganga's northern shore.

"Goddess of the mighty Ganga!" so the pious Sita prayed,
"Exiled by his father's mandate, Rama seeks the forest shade,

Ganga! o'er the three worlds rolling, bride and empress of the sea,
And from BRAHMA'S sphere descended! banished Sita bows to thee,

May my lord return in safety, and a thousand fattened kine,
Gold and gifts and gorgeous garments, pure libations shall be thine,

And with flesh and corn I worship unseen dwellers on thy shore,
May my lord return in safety, fourteen years of exile o'er!"

On the southern shore they journeyed through the long and weary day,
Still through grove and flowering woodland held their long and weary way,

And they slayed the deer of jungle and they spread their rich repast,
Third night of the princes' exile underneath a tree was past.

Morning dawned, the soft-eyed Sita wandered with the princes brave,
To the spot where ruddy Ganga mingles with dark Jumna's wave,

And they crost the shady woodland, verdant lawn and grassy mead,
Till the sun was in its zenith, Rama then to Lakshman said:

"Yonder mark the famed Prayaga, spot revered from age to age,
And the line of smoke ascending speaks some *rishi's* hermitage,

There the waves of ruddy Ganga with the dark blue Jumna meet,
And my ear the sea-like voices of the mingling waters greet.

Mark the monarchs of the forest severed by the hermit's might,
And the logs of wood and fuel for the sacrificial rite,

Mark the tall trees in their blossom and the peaceful shady grove,
There the sages make their dwelling, thither, Lakshman, let us rove."

Slowly came the exile-wand'ers, when the sun withdrew his rays,
Where the vast and sea-like rivers met in sisters' sweet embrace,

And the *asram's* peaceful dwellers, bird of song and spotted deer,
Quaked to see the princely strangers in their warlike garb appear !

Rama stepped with valiant Lakshman, gentle Sita followed close,
'Till behind the screening foliage hermits' peaceful dwellings rose,

And they came to Bharad-vaja, anchorite and holy saint,
Girt by true and faithful pupils on his sacred duty bent,

Famed for rites and lofty penance was the anchorite of yore,
Blest with more than mortal vision, deep in more than mortal lore,

And he sat beside the altar for the *agni-hotra* rite,
Rama spake in humble accents to the man of holy might :

"We are sons of Dasa-ratha and to thee our homage bring,
With my wife, the saintly Sita, daughter of Videha's king,

Exiled by my royal father in the wilderness I roam,
And my wife and faithful brother make the pathless woods their home,

We would through these years of exile in some holy *asram* dwell,
And our food shall be the wild fruit and our drink from crystal well,

We would practise pious penance still on sacred rites intent,
'Till our souls be filled with wisdom and our years of exile spent !"

Pleased the ancient Bharad-vaja heard the prince's humble tale,
And with kind and courteous welcome royal strangers greeted well,

And he brought the milk and *arghya* where the guests observant stood,
Crystal water from the fountain, berries from the darksome wood,

And a low and leafy cottage for their dwelling-place assigned,
As a host receives a stranger, welcomed them with offerings kind.

In the *asram's* peaceful courtyard fearless browsed the jungle deer,
All unharmed the bird of forest pecked the grain collected near,

And by holy men surrounded 'neath the trees' umbrageous shade,
In his pure and peaceful accents *rishi* Bharad-vaja said :

"Not unknown or unexpected, princely strangers, have ye come,
I have heard of sinless Rama's causeless banishment from home,

Welcome to a hermit's forest, be this spot your place of rest,
Where the meeting of the rivers makes our sacred *asram* blest,

Live amidst these peaceful woodlands, still on sacred rites intent
Till your souls be filled with wisdom and your years of exile spent ! "

"Gracious are thy accents, *rishi*," Rama answered thus the sage,
"But fair towns and peopled hamlets border on this hermitage,

And to see the banished Sita and to see us, much I fear,
Crowds of rustics oft will trespass on thy calm devotions here,

Far from towns and peopled hamlets, grant us, *rishi*, in thy grace,
Some wild spot where hid in jungle we may pass these years in peace."

"Twenty miles from this Prayaga," spake the *rishi* pond'ring well,
"Is a lonely hill and jungle where some ancient hermits dwell,

Chitra-kuta, Peak of Beauty, where the forest creatures stray,
And in every bush and thicket herds of lightsome monkeys play,

Men who view its towering summit are on lofty thoughts inclined,
Earthly pride nor earthly passions cloud their pure and peaceful mind,

Hoary-headed ancient hermits, hundred autumns who have done,
By their faith and lofty penance heaven's eternal bliss have won,

Holy is the fair seclusion for thy purpose suited well,
Or if still thy heart inclineth, here in peace and comfort dwell ! "

Spake the *rishi* Bharad-vaja, and with every courteous rite,
Cheered his guests with varied converse till the silent hours of night,

Fourth night of the princes' exile in Prayaga's hermitage,
Passed the brothers and fair Sita honoured by Prayaga's Sage.

VII

Crossing the Jumna—Valmiki's Hermitage

Morning dawned, and faithful Sita with the brothers held her way,
Where the dark and eddying waters of the sacred Jumna stray,

Pondering by the rapid river long and thoughtful brothers stood,
Then with stalwart arms and axes felled the sturdy jungle wood,

Usira of strongest fibre, slender bamboo smooth and plain,
Jambu branches intertwining with the bent and twisting cane,

And a mighty raft constructed, and with creepers scented sweet,
Lakshman for the gentle Sita made a soft and pleasant seat.

Then the rustic bark was floated, framed with skill of woodman's craft,
By her loving lord supported Sita stepped upon the raft,

And her raiments and apparel Rama by his consort laid,
And the axes and the deerskins, bow and dart and shining blade,

Then with stalwart arms the brothers plied the bending bamboo oar,
And the strongraft gaily bounding left for Jumna's southern shore.

"Goddess of the glorious Jumna!" so the pious Sita prayed,
'Peaceful be my husband's exile in the forest's darksome shade,

May he safely reach Ayodhya, and a thousand fattened kine,
Hundred jars of sweet libation, mighty Jumna, shall be thine,

Grant that from the woods returning he may see his home again,
Grant that honoured by his kinsmen he may rule his loving men!"

In her breast her arms she folded while the princes plied the oar,
And the bright bark bravely bounding reached the wooded southern shore.

And the wanderers from Ayodhya on the river's margin stood,
Where the unknown realm extended mantled by unending wood,

Gallant Lakshman with his weapons went before the path to clear,
Soft-eyed Sita followed gently, Rama followed in the rear.

Oft from tree and darksome jungle, Lakshman ever true and brave,
Plucked the fruit and smiling blossom and to gentle Sita gave,

Oft to Rama turned his consort, pleased and curious evermore,
Asked the name of tree or creeper, fruit or flower unseen before.

Still with brotherly affection Lakshman brought each dewy spray,
Bud or blossom of wild beauty from the woodland bright and gay,

Still with eager joy and pleasure Sita turned her eye once more,
Where the tuneful swans and *saras* flocked on Jumna's sandy shore.

Two miles thus they walked and wandered and the belt of forest passed,
Slew the wild deer of the jungle, spread on leaves their rich repast,

Peacocks flew around them gaily, monkeys leaped on branches bent,
Fifth night of their endless wanderings in the forest thus they spent.

"Wake, my love, and list the warblings and the voices of the wood,"
Thus spake Rama when the morning on the eastern mountains stood,

Sita woke and gallant Lakshman, and they sipped the sacred wave,
To the hill of Chitra-kuta held their way serene and brave.

"Mark, my love," so Rama uttered, "every bush and tree and flower,
Tinged by radiant light of morning sparkles in a golden shower,

Mark the flaming flower of *Kinsuk* and the *Vilva* in his pride,
Luscious fruits in wild profusion ample store of food provide,

Mark the honeycombs suspended from each tall and stately tree,
How from every virgin blossom steals her store the faithless bee !

Oft the lone and startled wild cock sounds its clarion full and clear,
And from flowering fragrant forests peacocks send the answeating cheer,

Oft the elephant of jungle ranges in this darksome wood,
For yon peak is Cnitra-kuta loved by saints and hermits good,

Oft the chanted songs of hermits echo through its sacred grove,
Peaceful on its shady uplands, Sita, we shall live and rove ! ”

Gently thus the princes wandered through the fair and woodland scene,
Fruits and blossoms lit the branches, feathered songsters filled the green,

Anchorites and ancient hermits lived in every sylvan grove,
And a sweet and sacred stillness filled the woods with peace and love !

Gently thus the princes wandered to the holy hermitage,
Where in lofty contemplation lived the mighty Saint and Sage,

Heaven inspired thy song, Valmiki ! Ancient Bard of ancient day,
Deeds of virtue and of valour live in thy undying lay !

And the Bard received the princes with the father's greetings kind,
Bade them live in Chitra-kuta with a pure and peaceful mind,

To the true and faithful Lakshman, Rama then his purpose said,
And of leaf and forest timber Lakshman soon a cottage made.

“So our sacred *Sastras* sanction,” thus the righteous Rama spake,
“Holy offering we should render when our dwelling-home we make,

Slay the black buck, gallant Lakshman, and a sacrifice prepare,
For the moment is auspicious and the day is bright and fair.”

Lakshman slew a mighty black-buck, with the antlered trophy came,
Placed the carcass consecrated by the altar's blazing flame,

Radiant round the mighty offering tongues of red fire curling shone,
And the buck was duly roasted and the tender meat was done.

Pure from bath, with sacred *mantra* Rama did the holy rite,
And invoked the bright Immortals for to bless the dwelling site,

To the kindly VISWA-DEVAS, and to RUDRA fierce and strong,
And to VISHNU Lord of Creatures, Rama raised the sacred song.

Righteous rite was duly rendered for the forest-dwelling made,
And with true and deep devotion was the sacred *mantra* prayed,

And the worship of the Bright Ones purified each earthly stain,
Pure-sould Rama raised the altar and the *chaitya's* sacred fane.

Evening spread its holy stillness, bush and tree its magic felt,
As the Gods in BRAHMA's mansions, exiles in their cottage dwelt,

In the woods of Chitra-kuta where the Malyavati flows,
Sixth day of their weary wand'rings ended in a sweet repose.

VIII

Tale of the Hermit's Son

Wise Sumantra chariot-driver came from Ganga's sacred wave,
And unto Ayodhya's monarch, banished Rama's message gave,

Dasa-ratha's heart was shadowed by the deepening shade of night,
As the darkness of the eclipse glooms the sun's meridian light !

On the sixth night,—when his Rama slept in Chitra-kuta's bower, —
Memory of an ancient sorrow flung on him its fatal power,

Of an ancient crime and anguish, unforgotten, dark and dread, ,
Through the lapse of years and seasons casting back its death-like shade !

And the gloom of midnight deepened, Dasa-ratha sinking fast,
To Kausalya sad and sorrowing spake his memories of the past :

"Deeds we do in life, Kausalya, be they bitter, be they sweet,
Bring their fruit and retribution, rich reward or suffering meet,

Heedless child is he, Kausalya, in his fate who doth not scan
Retribution of his *karma*, sequence of a mighty plan !

Oft in madness and in folly we destroy the mango grove,
Plant the gorgeous gay *palasa* for the red flower that we love,

Fruitless as the red *palasa* is the *karma* I have sown,
And my barren lifetime withers through the deed which is my own !

Listen to my tale, Kausalya, in my days of youth renowned,
I was called a *sabda-bedhi*, archer prince who shot by sound,

I could hit the unseen target, by the sound my aim could tell,—
Blindly drinks a child the poison, blindly in my pride I felt !

I was then my father's Regent, thou a maid to me unknown,
Hunting by the fair Sarayu in my car I drove alone,

Buffalo or jungle tusker might frequent the river's brink,
Nimble deer or watchful tiger stealing for his nightly drink,

Stalking with a hunter's patience, loitering in the forests drear,
Sound of something in the water struck my keen and listening ear,

In the dark I stood and listened, some wild beast the water drunk,
'Tis some elephant, I pondered, lifting water with its trunk.

I was called a *sabda-bedhi*, archer prince who shot by sound,
On the unseen fancied tusker dealt a sure and deadly wound,

Ah ! too deadly was my arrow and like hissing cobra fell,
On my startled ear and bosom smote a voice of human wail,

Dying voice of lamentation rose upon the midnight high,
Till my weapons fell in tremor and a darkness dimmed my eye !

Hastening with a nameless terror soon I reached Sarayu's shore,
Saw a boy with hermit's tresses, and his pitcher lay before,

Weltering in a pool of red blood, lying on a gory bed,
Feebly raised his voice the hermit, and in dying accents said :

'What offence, O mighty monarch, all-unknowing have I done,
That with quick and kingly justice slayest thus a hermit's son ?

Old and feeble are my parents, sightless by the will of fate,
Thirsty in their humble cottage for their duteous boy they wait,

And thy shaft that kills me, monarch, bids my ancient parents die,
Helpless, friendless, they will perish, in their anguish deep and high !

Sacred lore and life-long penance change not mortal's earthly state,
Wherefore else they sit unconscious when their son is doomed by fate,

Or if conscious of my danger, could they dying breath recall,
Can the tall tree save the sapling doomed by woodman's axe to fall ?

Hasten to my parents, monarch, soothe their sorrow and their ire,
For the tears of good and righteous wither like the forest fire,

Short the pathway to the *asram*, soon the cottage thou shalt see,
Soothe their anger by entreaty, ask their grace and pardon free !

But before thou goest, monarch, take, O take thy torturing dart,
For it rankles in my bosom with a cruel burning smart,

And it eats into my young life as the river's rolling tide
By the rains of summer swollen eats into its yielding side.'

Writhing in his pain and anguish thus the wounded hermit cried,
And I drew the fatal arrow, and the holy hermit died !

Darkly fell the thickening shadows, stars their feeble radiance lent,
As I filled the hermit's pitcher, to his sightless parents went,

Darkly fell the moonless midnight, deeper gloom my bosom rent,
As with faint and faltering footsteps to the hermits slow I went.

Like two birds bereft of plumage, void of strength, deprived of flight,
Were the stricken ancient hermits, friendless, helpless, void of sight,

Lisping in their feeble accents still they whispered of their child,
Of the stainless boy whose red blood Dasa-ratha's hands defiled !

And the father heard my footsteps, spake in accents soft and kind :
'Come, my son, to waiting parents, wherefore dost thou stay behind,

Sporting in the rippling water didst thou midnight's hour beguile,
But thy faint and thirsting mother anxious waits for thee the while,

Hath my heedless word or utterance caused thy boyish bosom smart,
But a feeble father's failings may not wound thy filial heart,

Help of helpless, sight of sightless, and thy parents' life and joy,
Wherefore art thou mute and voiceless, speak, my brave and beauteous boy !

Thus the sightless father welcomed cruel slayer of his son,
And an anguish tore my bosom for the action I had done,

Scarce upon the sonless parents could I lift my aching eye,
Scarce in faint and faltering accents to the father make reply,

For a tremor shook my person and my spirit sank in dread,
Straining all my utmost prowess, thus in quavering voice I said :

'Not thy son, O holy hermit, but a Kshatra warrior born,
Dasa-ratha stands before thee by a cruel anguish torn,

For I came to slay the tusker by Sarayu's wooded brink,
Buffalo or deer of jungle stealing for his midnight drink,

And I heard a distant gurgle, some wild beast the water drunk,—
So I thought,—some jungle tusker lifting water with its trunk,

And I sent my fatal arrow on the unknown, unseen prey,
Speeding to the spot I witnessed,—there a dying hermit lay !

From his pierced and quivering bosom then the cruel dart I drew,
And he sorrowed for his parents as his spirit heavenward flew,

Thus unconscious, holy father, I have slayed thy stainless son,
Speak my penance, or in mercy pardon deed unknowing done !

Slow and sadly by their bidding to the fatal spot I led,
Long and loud bewailed the parents by the cold unconscious dead,

And with hymns and holy water they performed the funeral rite,
Then with tears that burnt and withered, spake the hermit in his might :

*'Sorrow for a son beloved is a father's direst woe,
Sorrow for a son beloved, Dasa-ratha, thou shalt know !*

*See the parents weep and perish, grieving for a slaughtered son,
Thou shalt weep and thou shalt perish for a loved and righteous son !*

*Distant is the expiation,—but in fulness of the time,
Dasa-ratha's death in anguish cleanses Dasa-ratha's crime !'*

Spake the old and sightless prophet ; then he made the funeral pyre,
And the father and the mother perished in the lighted fire,

Years have gone and many seasons, and in fulness of the time,
Comes the fruit of pride and folly and the harvest of my crime !

Rama eldest born and dearest, Lakshman true and faithful son,
Ah ! forgive a dying father and a cruel action done,

Queen Kaikeyi, thou hast heedless brought on Raghu's race this stain,
Banished are the guiltless children and thy lord and king is slain !

Lay thy hands on mine, Kausalya, wipe thy unavailing tear,
Speak a wife's consoling accents to a dying husband's ear,

Lay thy hands on mine, Sumitra, vision falls my closing eyes,
And for brave and banished Rama wings my spirit to the skies !"

Hushed and silent pressed the midnight, feebly still the monarch sighed,
Blessed Kausalya and Sumitra, blest his banished sons, and died.

BOOK IV

RAMA-BHARATA-SAMBADA

(The meeting of the Princes)

THE scene of this book is laid at Chitra-kuta. Bharat returning from the kingdom of the Kaikeyas heard of his father's death and his brother's exile, and refused the throne which had been reserved for him. He wandered through the woods and jungle to Chitra-kuta, and implored Rama to return to Ayodhya, and seat himself on the throne of his father. But Rama had given his word, and would not withdraw from it.

Few passages in the Epic are more impressive than Rama's wise and kindly advice to Bharat on the duties of a ruler, and his firm refusal to Bharat's passionate appeal to seat himself on the throne. Equally touching is the lament of Queen Kausalya when she meets Sita in the dress of an anchorite in the forest.

But one of the most curious passages in the whole Epic is the speech of Jabali the Sceptic, who denied heaven and a world hereafter. In ancient India as in ancient Greece there was different schools of philosophers, some of them orthodox and some of them extremely heterodox, and the greatest latitude of free thought was permitted. In Jabali, the poet depicts a free-thinker of the broadest type. He ridicules the ideas of Duty and of future Life with a force of reasoning which the Greek sophist and philosopher could not have surpassed. But Rama answers with the fervour of a righteous, truth-loving, God-fearing man.

All persuasion was in vain, and Bharat returned to Ayodhya with Rama's sandals, and placed them on the throne, as an emblem of Rama's sovereignty during his voluntary exile. Rama himself then left Chitra-kuta and sought the deeper forests of Dandak, so that his

friends and relations might not find him again during his exile. He visited the hermitage of the Saint Atri; and the ancient and venerable wife of Atri welcomed the young Sita, and robed her in rich raiments and jewels, on the eve of her departure for the unexplored wilderness of the south.

The portions translated in this Book are the whole or the main portions of Sections xcix., c., ci., civ., cviii., cix., cxii., and cxix. of Book ii. of the original text.

I

The Meeting of the Brothers

Sorrowing for his sire departed Bharat to Ayodhya came,
But the exile of his brother stung his noble heart to flame,

Scorning sin-polluted empire, travelling with each widowed queen,
Sought through wood and trackless jungle Chitra-kuta's peaceful scene,

Royal guards and Saint Vasishtha loitered with the dames behind,
Onward pressed the eager Bharat, Rama's hermit-home to find,

Nestled in a jungle thicket, Rama's cottage rose in sight,
Thatched with leaves and twining branches, reared by Lakshman's
faithful might.

Faggots hewn of gnarled branches, blossoms called from bush and tree
Costs of bark and russet garments, *kusa* spread upon the lea,

Store of horns and branching antlers, fire-wood for the dwey night,—
Spake the dwelling of a hermit suited for a hermit's rite.

"May the scene," so Bharat uttered, "by the righteous *rishi* told,
Markatvati's rippling waters, Chitra-kuta's summit bold,

Mark the dark and trackless forest where the untamed tuskers roam,
And the deep and hollow caverns where the wild beasts make their home,

Mark the spacious wooded uplands, wreaths of smoke obscure the sky,
Hermits feed their flaming altars for their worship pure and high.

Done our weary work and wand'ring, righteous Rama here we meet,
Saint and king and honoured elder ! Bharat bows unto his feet,

Born a king of many nations, he hath forest refuge sought,
Yielded throne and mighty kingdom for a hermit's humble cot,

Honour unto righteous Rama, unto Sita true and bold,
Theirs be fair Kosala's empire, crown and sceptre, wealth and gold !"

Stately *Sal* and feathered palm-tree on the cottage lent their shade,
Strewn upon the sacred altar was the grass of *kusa* spread,

Gaily on the walls suspended hung two bows of ample height,
And their back with gold was pencilled, bright as INDRA's bow of might,

Cased in broad unfailing quivers arrows shone like light of day,
And like flame-tongued fiery serpents cast a dread and lurid ray,

Resting in their golden scabbards lay the swords of warriors hold,
And the targets broad and ample bossed with rings of yellow gold,

Glove and gauntlet decked the cottage safe from fear of hostile men,
As from creatures of the forest is the lion's lordly den !

Calm, in silent contemplation by the altar's sacred fire,
Holy in his pious purpose though begirt by weapons dire,

Clad in deer-skin pure and peaceful, poring on the sacred flame,
In his bark and hermit's tresses like an anchorite of fame,

Lion-shouldered, mighty-armed, but with gentle lotus eye,
Lord of wide earth ocean-girdled, but intent on penance high,

Godlike as the holy BRAHMA, on a skin of dappled deer
 Rama sat with meek-eyed Sita, faithful Lakshman loitered near !

"Is this he whom joyous nations called to fair Ayodhya's throne,
 Now the friend of forest-rangers wandering in the woods alone,

Is this he who robed in purple made Ayodhya's mansions bright,
 Now in jungle bark and deer-skin clad as holy anchorite,

Is this he whose wreathed ringlets fresh and holy fragrance shed,
 Now a hermit's matted tresses cluster round his royal head,

Is this he whose royal *yajnas* filled the earth with righteous fame,
 Now inured to hermit's labour by the altar's sacred flame,

Is this he whose brow and forehead royal gem and jewel graced,
 Heir to proud Kosala's empire, eldest, noblest, and the best ? "

Thus lamented pious Bharat for his heart was anguish-rent,
 As before the feet of Rama he in loving homage bent,

"*Arya !*" in his choking accents this was all that Bharat said,
 "*Arya !*" spake the young Satrugna and he bent his holy head !

Rama to his loving bosom raised his brothers from his feet,
 Ah, too deep is love for utterance when divided brother meet,

Faithful Guba, brave Sumantra, bowed to Rama's righteous feet,
 And a joy and mingled sadness filled the hermit's calm retreat !

II

Bharat's Entreaty and Rama's Reply

"Speak, my true my faithful Bharat," so the righteous Rama cried,
 "Wherefore to this jungle dwelling hast thou from Ayounya fled,

Speak, my fond and loving brother, if our father bade thee come,
 Leaving throne and spacious empire in this wilderness to roam ?

Heir and Regent of Kosala ! Dost thou tend our father well,
And obey the lofty mandate from his royal lips that fell,

And the ancient Dasa-ratha, glorious still in regal might,
Doth he pass his bright life's evening in each pure and holy right ?

Doth my mother, Queen Kausalya, still for Rama wet her eye,
And the gentle Queen Sumitra for her banished Lakshman sigh,

Doth the peerless Queen Kaikeyi pass her days in duties fair,
Guard her Bharat's mighty empire, tend him with a mother's care ?

Is each holy right and homage to the Gods and Fathers done,
Is the honour due to elders rendered by each duteous son,

Do thy warriors guard thy kingdom as of yore with matchless skill,
And with counsel deep and duteous do thy min'isters serve thy will ?

Rich thy fields in corn and produce fed by rivers broad and deep,
Rich thy green unending pastures with the kine and fattened sheep,

Tend the herdsman and his cattle, tend the tiller of the soil,
Watch and help with all thy bounty workmen in their peaceful toil,

For the monarch's highest duty is to serve his people's weal
And the ruler's richest glory is to labour and to heal !

Guard thy forts with sleepless caution with the engines of the war,
With the men who shoot the arrow and who drive the flying car,

Guard Kosala's royal treasure, make thy gifts of wealth and food,
Not to lords and proud retainers, but to worthy and the good !

Render justice pure and spotless as befits thy royal line,
And to save the good and guiltless, Bharat, be it ever thine,

For the tears of suffering virtue wither like the thunder levin,
And they slay our men and cattle like the wrath of righteous heaven,

Fruitful be thy lore of Veda, fruitful be each pious rite,
Be thy queen a fruitful mother, be thy empire full of might !

Weeping, weeping, Bharat answered Dasa-ratha's eldest son,
"Dasa-ratha walks the bright sky, for his earthly task is done !

For impelled by Queen Kaikeyi to the woods he bade thee go,
And his spotless fame was clouded and his bosom sank in woe,

And my mother, late repenting, weeps her deed of deepest shame,
Weeps her wedded lord departed, and a woman's tarnished fame !

Thou alone canst wipe this insult by a deed of kindness done,—
Rule o'er Dasa-ratha's empire, Dasa-ratha's eldest son,

Weeping queens and loyal subjects supplicate thy noble grace,—
Rule o'er Raghu's ancient empire, son of Raghu's royal race !

For our ancient Law ordianeth and thy Duty makes it plain,
Eldest-born succeeds his father as the king of earth and main,

By the fair Earth loved and welcomed, Rama, be her wedded lord,
As by planet-jewelled Midnight is the radiant moon adored !

And thy father's ancient min'sters and thy courtiers faithful still,
Wait to do thy righteous mandate and to serve thy royal will,

As a pupil, as a brother, as a slave, I seek thy grace,—
Come and rule thy father's empire, king of Raghu's royal race ! "

Weeping, on the feet of Rama, Bharat placed his lowly head,
Weeping for his sire departed, tears of sorrow Rama shed,

Then he raised his loving brother with an elder's deathless love,
Sorrow wakes our deepest kindness and our holiest feelings prove !

"But I may not," answered Rama, "seek Ayodhya's ancient throne,
For a righteous father's mandate duteous son may not disown,

And I may not, gentle brother, break the word of promise given,
To a king and to a father who is now a saint in heaven !

Not on thee, nor on thy mother, rests the censure or the blame,
Faithful to his father's wishes Rama to the forest came,

THE RAMAYANA

For the son and duteous consort serve the father and the lord,
Higher than an empire's glory is a father's spoken word !

All inviolate is his mandate,—on Ayodhya's jewelled throne,
Or in pathless woods and jungle Rama shall his duty own,

All inviolate is the blessing by a loving mother given,
For she blessed my life in exile like a pitying saint of heaven !

*Thou shalt rule the kingdom, Bharat, guard our loving people well,
Clad in wild bark and in deer-skin I shall in the forests dwell,*

*So spake saintly Dasa-ratha in Ayodhya's palace hall,
And a righteous father's mandate duteous son may not recall ! "*

III

Kausalya's Lament and Rama's Reply

Slow and sad with Saint Vasishtha, with each widowed royal dame,
Unto Rama's hermit-cottage ancient Queen Kausalya came,

And she saw him clad in wild bark like a hermit stern and high,
And an anguish smote her bosom and a tear bedewed her eye.

Rama bowed unto his mother and each elder's blessings sought,
Held their feet in salutation with a holy reverence fraught,

And the queens with loving fingers, with a mother's tender care,
Swept the dust of wood and jungle from his head and bosom fair,

Lakshman too in loving homage bent before each royal dame,
And they blessed the faithful hero spotless in his righteous fame.

Lastly came the soft-eyed Sita with obeisance soft and sweet,
And with hands in meekness folded bent her tresses to their feet,

Pain and anguish smote their bosoms, round their Sita as they prest,
As a mother clasps a daughter, clasped her in their loving breast !

Torn from royal hall and mansion, ranger of the darksome wood,
Reft of home and kith and kindred by her forest hut she stood !

"Hast thou, daughter of Videha," weeping thus Kausalya said,
"Dwelt in woods and leafy cottage and in pathless jungle strayed,

Hast thou, Rama's royal consort, lived a homeless anchorite,
Pale with rigid fast and penance, worn with toil of righteous rite ?

But thy sweet face, gentle Sita, is like faded lotus dry,
And like lily parched by sunlight, lustreless thy beauteous eye,

Like the gold untimely tarnished is thy sorrow-shaded brow,
Like the moon by shadows darkened is thy form of beauty now !

And an anguish scathes my bosom like the withering forest fire,
Thus to see thee, duteous daughter, in misfortunes deep and dire,

Dark is wide Kosala's empire, dark is Raghu's royal house,
When in woods my Rama wanders and my Rama's royal spouse ! "

*Sweetly, gentle Sita answered, answered Rama fair and tall,
That a righteous father's mandate duteous son may not recall !*

IV

Jabali's Reasoning and Rama's Reply

Jabali a learned Brahman and a Sophist skilled in word,
Questioned Faith and Law and Duty, spoke to young Ayodhya's lord :

"Wherefore, Rama, idle maxims cloud thy heart and warp thy mind,
Maxims which mislead the simple and the thoughtless human kind ?

Love nor friendship doth a mortal to his kith or kindred own,
Entering on this wide earth friendless, and departing all alone,

Foolishly upon the father and the mother dotes the son,
Kinship is an idle fancy,—save thyself thy kith is none !

In the wayside inn he halteth who in distant lands doth roam,
Leaves it with the dawning daylight for another transient home,

Thus on earth are kin and kindred, home and country, wealth and store,
We but meet them on our journey, leave them as we pass before !

Wherefore for a father's mandate leave thy empire and thy throne,
Pass thy days in trackless jungle sacrificing all thy own,

Wherefore to Ayodhya's city, as to longing wife's embrace,
Speed'st thou not to rule thy empire, lord of Raghu's royal race ?

Dasa-ratha claims no duty, and his will is empty word,
View him as a foreign monarch, of thy realm thou art the lord,

Dasa-rathá is departed, gone where all the morals go,
For a dead man's idle mandate wherefore lead this life of woe ?

Ah ! I weep for erring mortals who on erring duty bent
Sacrifice their dear enjoyment till their barren life is spent,

Who to Gods and to the Fathers vainly still their offerings make,
Waste of food ! for God nor Father doth our pious homage take !

And the food by one partaken, can it nourish other men,
Food bestowed upon a Brahman, can it serve our Fathers then ?

Crafty priests have forged these maxims and with selfish objects say,—
Make thy gifts and do thy penance, leave thy worldly wealth and pray !

There is no Hereafter, Rama, vain the hope and creed of men,
Seek the pleasures of the present, spurn illusions poor and vain,

Take the course of sense and wisdom, cast all idle faith aside,
Take the kingdom Bharat offers, rule Ayodhya in thy pride !”

“ Fair thy purpose,” answered Rama, “ false thy reason leads astray,
Tortuous wisdom brings no profit, virtue shuns the crooked way,

For the deed proclaims the hero from the man of spacious lies,
Marks the true and upright *Arya* from the scheming worldly-wise !

If assuming virtue's mantle I should seek the sinful path,
 Gods who judge our secret motives curse me with their deepest wrath,

And thy counsel helps not, *rishi*, mansions of the sky to win,
 And a king his subjects follow adding deeper sin to sin !

Sweep aside thy crafty reasoning, Truth is still our ancient way,
 Truth sustains the earth and nations and a monarch's righteous sway,

Mighty Gods and holy sages find in Truth their haven shore,
 Scorning death and dark destruction, Truth survives for evermore,

Deadlier than the serpent's venom is the venom of a lie,
 From the false, than from the cobra, men with deeper terror fly,

Dearer than the food to mortals, Truth as nourishment is given,
 Truth sustains the wide creation, Truth upholds the highest heaven !

Vain were gifts and sacrifices, rigid penances were vain,
 Profitless the holy *Vedas* but for Truth which they sustain,

Gifts and rites and rigid penance have no aim or purpose high,
 Save in Truth which rules the wide earth and the regions of the sky !

I have plighted truth and promise and my word may not unsay,
 Fourteen years in pathless forests father's mandate I obey,

And I seek no spacious reasons my relinquished throne to win,
 Gods nor Fathers nor the *Vedas* counsel tortuous paths of sin !

Pardon, *rishi*, still unchanging shall remain my promise given
 To my mother Queen Kaikeyi, to my father now in heaven,

Pardon, *rishi*, still in jungle we shall seek the forest fare,
 Worship Gods who watch our actions, and pervade the earth and air !

Unto AGNI, unto VAYU, shall my constant prayers run,
 I shall live like happy INDRA, hundred sacrifices done,

*And the deep and darksome jungle shall be Rama's royal hall,
 For a righteous father's mandate duteous son may not recall !*

V

The Sandals

Tears nor sighs nor sad entreaty Rama's changeless purpose shook,
Till once more with hands conjoined Bharat to his elder spoke :

" Rama, true to royal mercy, true to duties of thy race,
Grant this favour to thy mother, to thy brother grant this grace,

Vain were my unaided efforts to protect our father's throne,
Town and hamlet, lord and tiller, turn to thee and thee alone !

Unto Rama, friends and kinsmen, chiefs and warriors, turn in pain,
And each city chief and elder, and each humble village swain,

Base thy empire strong, unshaken, on a loyal nation's will,
With thy worth and with thy valour serve thy faithful people still ! "

Rama raised the prostrate Bharat to his ever-loving breast,
And in voice of tuneful *hansa* thus his gentle speech address :

" Trust me, Bharat, lofty virtue, strength and will to thee belong,
Thou couldst rule a world-wide empire in thy faith and purpose strong,

And our father's ancient min'sters, ever faithful, wise and deep,
They shall help thee with their counsel and thy ancient frontiers keep.

List ! the Moon may lose his lustre, Himalaya lose his snow,
Heaving Ocean pass his confines surging from the caves below,

But the truth-abiding Rama will not move from promise given,
He hath spoke and will not palter, help him righteous Gods in heaven ! "

Blazing like the Sun in splendour, beauteous like the Lord of Night,
Rama vowed his Vow of Duty, changeless in his holy might ! *

" Humble token," answered Bharat, " still I seek from Rama's hand,
Token of his love and kindness, token of his high command,

From thy feet cast forth those sandals, they shall decorate the throne,
They shall nerve my heart to duty and shall safely guard thy own,

They shall to a loyal nation absent monarch's will proclaim,
Watch the frontiers of the empire and the people's homage claim ! ”

Rama gave the loosened sandals as his younger humble prayed,
Bharat bowed to them in homage and his parting purpose said :

“ Not alone will banished Rama barks and matted tresses wear,
Fourteen years the crowned Bharat will in hermit's dress appear,

Henceforth Bharat dwells in palace guised as hermit of the wood,
In the sumptuous hall of feasting wild fruit is his only food,

Fourteen years shall pass in waiting, weary toil and penance dire,
Then, if Rama comes not living, Bharat dies upon the pyre ! ”

VI

The Hermitage of Atri

With the sandals of his elder Bharat to Ayodhya went,
Rama sought for deeper forests on his arduous duty bent,

Wandering with his wife and Lakshman slowly sought the hermitage,
Where resided saintly Atri, Vedic Bard and ancient sage.

Anasuya, wife of Atri, votaress of Gods above,
Welcomed Sita in her cottage, tended her with mother's love,

Gave her robe and holy garland, jewelled ring and chain of gold,
Heard the tale of love and sadness which the soft-eyed Sita told :

How the monarch of Videha held the plough and tilled the earth,
From the furrow made by ploughshare infant Sita sprang to birth,

How the monarch of Videha welcomed kings of worth and pride,
Rama 'midst the gathered monarchs broke the bow and won the bride,

How by Queen Kaikeyi's mandate Rama lost his father's throne,
Sita followed him in exile in the forest dark and lone !

Softly from the lips of Sita words of joy and sorrow fell,
And the pure-souled pious priestess wept to hear the tender tale,

And she kissed her on the forehead, held her on her ancient breast,
And in mother's tender accents thus her gentle thoughts express :

"Sweet the tale you tell me, Sita, of thy wedding and thy love,
Of the true and tender Rama, righteous as the Gods above,

And thy wifely deep devotion fills my heart with purpose high,
Stay with us my gentle daughter for the night shades gather nigh,

Hastening from each distant region feathered songsters seek their nest,
Twitter in the leafy thickets ere they seek their nightly rest,

Hastening from their pure ablutions with their pitchers smooth and fair,
In their dripping barks the hermits to their evening rites repair,

And in sacred *agni-hotra* holy anchorites engage,
And a wreath of smoke ascending marks the altar of each sage,

Now a deeper shadow mantles bush and brake and trees around,
And a thick and inky darkness falls upon the distant ground,

Midnight prowlers of the jungle steal beneath the sable shade,
But the tame deer by the altar seeks his wonted nightly bed.

Mark! how by the stars encircled sails the radiant Lord of Night,
With his train of silver glory streaming o'er the azure height,

And thy consort waits thee, Sita, but before thou leavest, fair,
Let me deck thy brow and bosom with these jewels rich and rare,

Oh! these eyes and grey these tresses, but a thrill of joy is mine,
To see thy youth and beauty in this gorgeous garment shine !"

Pleased at heart the ancient priestess clad her in apparel meet,
And the young wife glad and grateful bowed to Anasuya's feet,

Robed and jewelled, bright and beauteous, sweet-eyed Sita softly came,
Where with anxious heart awaited Rama prince of righteous fame.

With a wifely love and longing Sita met her hero hold,
Anasuya's love and kindness in her grateful accents told,

Rama and his brother listened of the grace by Sita gained,
Favours of the ancient priestess, pious blessings she had rained.

In the *rishi's* peaceful *asram* Rama passed the sacred night,
In the hushed and silent forest silvered by the moon's pale light,

Daylight dawned, to deeper forests Rama went serene and proud,
As the sun in mid-day splendour sinks within a bank of cloud!

BOOK V

PANCHAVATI

(On the banks of the Godavari)

THE wanderings of Rama in the Deccan, his meeting with Saint Agastya, and his residence on the banks of the Gadavari river, are narrated in this Book. The reader has now left Northern India and crossed the Vindhya mountains; and the scene of the present and succeeding five Books is laid in the Deccan and Southern India. The name of Agastya is connected with the Deccan, and many are the legends told of this great Saint, before whom the Vindhya mountains bent in awe, and by whose might the Southern ocean was drained. It is likely that some religious teacher of that name first penetrated beyond the Vindhyas, and founded the first Aryan settlement in the Deccan, three thousand years ago. He was pioneer, discoverer and settler,—the Indian Columbus who opened out Southern India to Aryan colonization and Aryan religion.

Two *yojanas* from Agastya's hermitage, Rama built his forest dwelling in the woods of Panchavati, near the sources of the Godavari river, and within a hundred miles from the modern city of Bombay. There he lived with his wife and brother in peace and piety, and the Book closes with the description of an Indian winter morning, when the brothers and Sita went for their ablutions to the Godavari, and thought of their distant home in Oudh. The description of the peaceful forest-life of the exiles comes in most appropriately on the eve of stirring events which immediately succeed, and which give a new turn to the story of the Epic. We now stand therefore at the turning point of the poet's narrative; he has sung of domestic inci-

ents and of peaceful hermitages so far ; he sings of dissensions and wars hereafter.

The portions translated in this Book form Sections i., xii., xiii., xv., and xvi., of Book iii. of the original text.

I

The Hermitage of Agastya

Righteous Rama, soft-eyed Sita, and the gallant Lakshman stood
In the wilderness of Dandak,—trackless, pathless, boundless wood,

But within its gloomy gorges, dark and deep and known to few,
Humble homes of hermit sages rose before the princes' view.

Coats of bark and scattered *kusa* spake their peaceful pure abode,
Seat of pious rite and penance which with holy splendour glowed,

Forest songsters knew the *asram* and the wild deer cropt its blade,
And the sweet-voiced sylvan wood-nymph haunted oft its holy shade,

Brightly blazed the sacred altar, vase and ladle stood around,
Fruit and blossom, skin and faggot, sanctified the holy ground.

From the broad and bending branches ripening fruits in clusters hung,
And with gifts and rich libations hermits raised the ancient song,

Lotus and the virgin lily danced upon the rippling rill,
And the golden sunlight glittered on the greenwoods calm and still,

And the consecrated woodland by the holy hermits trod,
Shone like BRAHMA's sky in lustre, hallowed by the grace of God !

Rama loosened there his bow-string and the peaceful scene surveyed,
And the holy sages welcomed wanderers in the forest shade,

Rama bright as Lord of Midnight, Sita with her saintly face,
Lakshman young and true and valiant, decked with warrior's peerless
grace !

Leafy hut the holy sages to the royal guests assigned,
Brought them fruit and forest blossom, blessed them with their blessings kind,

"Raghu's son," thus spake the sages, "helper of each holy rite,
Portion of the royal INDRA, fount of justice and of might,

On thy throne or in the forest, king of nations, lord of men,
Grant to us thy kind protection in this hermit's lonely den !"

Homely fare and jungle produce were before the princes laid,
And the toil-worn, tender Sita slumbered in the *asram's* shade.

Thus from grove to grove they wandered, to each haunt of holy sage,
Sarabhanga's sacred dwelling and Sutikshna's hermitage,

Till they met the Saint Agastya, mightiest Saint of olden time,
Harbinger of holy culture in the wilds of Southern clime !

"Eldest born of Dasa-ratha, long and far hath Rama strayed,"—
Thus to pupil of Agastya young and gallant Lakshman said,—

"With his faithful consort Sita in these wilds he wanders still,
I am righteous Rama's younger, duteous to his royal will,

And we pass these years of exile to our father's mandate true,
Fain to mighty Saint Agastya we would render homage due !"

Listening to his words the hermit sought the shrine of Sacred Fire,
Spake the message of the princes to the Saint and ancient Sire :

"Righteous Rama, valiant Lakshman, saintly Sita seek this shade,
And to see thee, radiant *rishi*, have in humble accents prayed."

"Hath he come," so spake Agastya, "Rama prince of Raghu's race,
Youth for whom this heart hath thirsted, youth endued with righteous grace,

Hath he come with wife and brother to accept our greetings kind,
Wherefore came ye for permission, wherefore linger they behind ?"

Rama and the soft-eyed Sita were with gallant Lakshman led,
Where the dun deer free and fearless roamed within the holy shade,

Where the shrines of great Immortals stood in order thick and close,
And by bright and blazing altars chanted songs and hymns arose.

BRAHMA and the flaming AGNI, VISHNU lord of heavenly light,
INDRA and benign VIVASAT ruler of the azure height,

SOMA and the radiant BHAGA, and KUVERA lord of gold,
And VIDHATRI great Creator worshipped by the saints of old,

VAYU breath of living creatures, YAMA monarch of the dead,
And VARUNA with his fetters which the trembling sinners dread,

Holy Spirit of GAYATRI goddess of the morning prayer,
VASUS and the hooded NAGAS, golden-winged GARUDA fair,

KARTIKEYA heavenly leader strong to conquer and to bless,
DHARMA god of human duty and of human righteousness,

Shrines of all these bright Immortals ruling in the skies above,
Filled the pure and peaceful forest with a calm and holy love !

Girt by hermits righteous-hearted then the Saint Agastya came,
Rich in wealth of pious penance, rich in learning and in fame,

Mighty-armed Rama marked him radiant like the midday sun,
Bowed and rendered due obeisance with each act of homage done,

Valiant Lakshman tall and stately to the great Agastya bent,
With a woman's soft devotion Sita bowed unto the saint.

Saint Agastya raised the princes, greeted them in accents sweet,
Gave them fruit and herb and water, offered them the honoured seat,

With libations unto AGNI offered welcome to each guest,
Food and drink beseeming hermits on the wearied princes pressed,

"False the hermits," spake Agastya, "who to guests their dues deny,
Hunger they in life hereafter—like the speaker of a lie,

And a royal guest and wanderer doth our foremost honour claim,
Car-borne kings protect the wide earth by their prowess and their fame,

By these fruits and forest blossoms be our humble homage shewn,
By some gift, of Rama worthy, be Agastya's blessings known !

Take this bow, heroic Rama, — need for warlike arms is thine, —
Gems of more than earthly radiance on the goodly weapon shine,

Worshipper of righteous VISHNU ! VISHNU's wondrous weapon take,
Heavenly artist VISWA-KARMA shaped this bow of heavenly make !

Take this shining dart of BRAHMA radiant like a tongue of flame,
Sped by good and worthy archer never shall it miss its aim,

And this INDRA's ample quiver filled with arrows true and keen,
Filled with arrows still unfailing in the battle's dreadful scene !

Take this sabre golden-hilted in its case of burnished gold,
Not unworthy of a monarch and a warrior true and bold,

Impious foes of bright Immortals know these weapons dread and dire,
Mowing down the ranks of foemen, scathing like the forest fire !

*Be these weapons thy companions, — Rama, thou shalt need them oft, —
Meet and conquer still thy foemen like the Thunder-God aloft !*

II

The Counsel of Agastya

"Pleased am I," so spake Agastya, "in these forests dark and wild,
Thou hast come to seek me, Rama, with the saintly Janak's child,

But like pale and drooping blossom severed from the parent tree,
Far from home in toil and trouble, faithful Sita follows thee,

True to wedded lord and husband she hath followed Raghu's son,
With a woman's deep devotion woman's duty she hath done !

How unlike the fickle woman, true while Fame and Fortune smile,
Faithless when misfortunes gather, loveless in her wicked wile,

How unlike the changeful woman, false as light the lightnings fling,
Keen as sabre, quick as tempest, swift as bird upon its wing !

Dead to Fortune's frown or favour, Sita still in truth abides,
As the star of Arundhati in her mansion still resides,

Rest thee with thy gentle consort, farther still she may not roam,
Holier were this hermit's forest as the saintly Sita's home !

"Great Agastya !" answered Rama, "blessed is my banished life,
For thy kindness to an exile and his friendless homeless wife,

But in wilder, gloomier forests lonesome we must wander still,
Where a deeper, darker shadow settles on the rock and rill."

"Be it so," Agastya answered, "two short *yojans* from this place,
Wild is Panchavati's forest where unseen the wild deer race,

Ġodavari's limpid waters through its gloomy gorges flow,
Fruit and root and luscious berries on its silent margin grow,

Seek that spot and with thy brother build a lonesome leafy home,
Tend thy true and toil-worn Sita, farther still she may not roam !

Not unknown to me the mandate by thy royal father given,
Not unseen thy endless wanderings destined by the will of Heaven,

Therefore Panchavati's forest marked I for thy woodland stay,
Where the ripening wild fruit clusters and the wild bird trills his lay,

Tend thy dear devoted Sita and protect each pious rite,
Matchless in thy warlike weapons peerless in thy princely might !

Mark yon gloomy *Mahua* forest stretching o'er the boundless lea,
Pass that wood and turning northward seek an old *Nyagrodha* tree,

Then ascend a sloping upland by a steep and lofty hill,
Thou shalt enter Panchavati, blossom-covered, calm and still ! ”

Bowing to the great Agastya, Rama left the mighty sage,
Bowing to each saint and hermit, Lakshman left the hermitage,

And the princes tall and stately marched where Panchavati lay,
Soft-eyed Sita followed meekly where her Rama led the way !

III

The Forest of Panchavati

Godavari's limpid waters in her gloomy gorges strayed,
Unseen rangers of the jungle nestled in the darksome shade !

“ Mark the woodlands,” uttered Rama, “ by the Saint Agastya told,
Panchavati's lonesome forest with its blossoms red and gold,

Skilled to scan the wood and jungle, Lakshman, cast thy eye around,
For our humble home and dwelling seek a low and level ground,

Where the river laves its margin with a soft and gentle kiss,
Where my sweet and soft-eyed Sita may repose in sylvan bliss,

Where the lawn is fresh and verdant and the *kusa* young and bright,
And the creeper yield her blossoms for our sacrificial rite.”

“ Little can I help thee, brother,” did the duteous Lakshman say,
“ Thou art prompt to judge and fathom, Lakshman listens to obey ! ”

“ Mark this spot,” so answered Rama, leading Lakshman by the hand
“ Soft the lawn of verdant *kusa*, beauteous blossoms light the land,

Mark the smiling lake of lotus gleaming with a radiance fair,
Wafting fresh and gentle fragrance o'er the rich and laden air,

Mark each scented shrub and creeper bending o'er the lucid wave,
Where the bank with soft caresses Godavari's waters lave !

Tuneful ducks frequent this margin, *Chakravakas* breathe of love,
And the timid deer of jungle browse within the shady grove,

And the valleys are resonant with the peacock's clarion cry,
And the trees with budding blossoms glitter on the mountains high,

And the rocks in well-marked strata in their glittering lines appear,
Like the streaks of white and crimson painted on our tuskers fair !

Stately *Sal* and feathered palm-tree guard this darksome forest-land,
Golden date and flowering mango stretch afar on either hand,

Asok thrives and blazing *Kinsuk*, *Chandan* wafts a fragrance rare,
Aswa-karna and *Khadira* by the *Sami* dark and fair,

Beauteous spot for hermit-dwelling joyous with the voice of song,
Haunted by the timid wild deer and by black buck fleet and strong ! "

Foe-compelling faithful Lakshman heard the words his elder said,
And by sturdy toil and labour stately home and dwelling made,

Spacious was the leafy cottage walled with moistened earth and soft,
Pillared with the stately bamboo holding high the roof aloft,

Interlacing twigs and branches, corded from the ridge to eaves,
Held the thatch of reed and branches and of jungle grass and leaves,

And the floor was pressed and levelled and the toilsome task was done,
And the structure rose in beauty for the righteous Raghu's son !

To the river for ablutions Lakshman went of warlike fame,
With a store of fragrant lotus and of luscious berries came,

Sacrificing to the Bright Gods sacred hymns and *mantras* said,
Proudly then unto his elder shewed the home his hand had made,

In her soft and grateful accents gentle Sita praised his skill,
Praised a brother's loving labour, praised a hero's dauntless will,

Rama clasped his faithful Lakshman in a brother's fond embrace,
Spoke in sweet and kindly accents with an elder's loving grace ;

"How can Rama, homeless wand'rer, priceless love like thine requite,
Let him hold thee in his bosom, soul of love and arm of might,

And our father good and gracious, in a righteous son like thee,
Lives again and treads the bright earth, from the bonds of YAMA free !"

Thus spake Rama, and with Lakshman and with Sita child of love,
Dwelt in Panchavati's cottage as the Bright Gods dwell above !

IV

Winter in Panchavati

Came and passed the golden autumn in the forest's gloomy shade,
And the northern blast of winter swept along the silent glade,

When the chilly night was over, once at morn the prince of fame
For his morning's pure ablutions to the Godavari came.

Meek-eyed Sita softly followed with the pitcher in her arms,
Gallant Lakshman spake to Rama of the Indian winter's charms :

"Comes the bright and bracing winter to the royal Rama dear,
Like a bride the beauteous season doth in richest robes appear,

Frosty air and freshening zephyrs wake to life each mart and plain,
And the corn in dewdrop sparkling makes a sea of waving green,

But the village maid and matron shun the freezing river's shore,
By the fire the village elder tells the stirring tale of yore ;

With the winter's ample harvest men perform each pious rite,
'To the Fathers long departed, to the Gods of holy might,

With the rite of *agrayana* pious men their sins dispel,
And with gay and sweet observance songs of love the women tell,

And the monarchs bent on conquest mark the winter's cloudless glow,
Lead their banneted cars and forces 'gainst the rival and the foe !

Southwards rolls the solar chariot, and the cold and widowed North
Reft of 'bridal mark' and joyance coldly sighs her sorrows forth,

Southward rolls the solar chariot, Himalaya, 'home of snow,'
True to name and appellation doth in whiter garments glow,

Southward rolls the solar chariot, cold and crisp the frosty air,
And the wood of flower dismantled doth in russet robes appear !

Star of Pushya rules December and the night with rime is hoar,
And beneath the starry welkin in the woods we sleep no more,

And the pale moon mist-enshrouded sheds a faint and feeble beam,
As the breath obscures the mirror, winter mist obscures her gleam,

Hidden by the rising vapour faint she glistens on the dale,
Like our sun-embrownéd Sita with her toil and penance pale !

Sweeping blasts from western mountains through the gorges whistle by
As the *saras* and the curlew raise their shrill and piercing cry,

Boundless fields of wheat and barley are with dewdrops moist and wet,
And the golden rice of winter ripens like the clustering date,

Peopled marts and rural hamlets wake to life and cheerful toil,
And the peaceful happy nations prosper on their fertile soil !

Mark the sun in morning vapours—like the moon subdued and pale—
Brightening as the day advances piercing through the darksome veil,

Mark his gay and golden lustre sparkling o'er the dewy lea,
Mantling hill and field and forest, painting bush and leaf and tree,

Mark it glisten on the green grass, on each bright and bending blade,
Lighten up the long drawn vista, shooting through the gloomy glade !

Thirst-impelled the lordly tusker still avoids the freezing drink,
Wild duck and the tuneful *hansa* doubtful watch the river's brink,

From the rivers wrapped in vapour unseen cries the wild curlew,
Unseen rolls the misty streamlet o'er its sandbank soaked in dew,

And the drooping water-lily bends her head beneath the frost,
Lost her fresh and fragrant beauty and her tender petals lost !

Now my errant fancy wanders to Ayodhya's distant town,
Where in hermit's barks and tresses Bharat wears the royal crown,

Scorning regal state and splendour, spurning pleasures loved of yore,
Spends his winter day in penance, sleeps at night upon the floor,

Aye ! perchance Sarayu's waters seeks he now, serene and brave,
As we seek, when dawns the daylight, Godavari's limpid wave !

Rich of hue, with eye of lotus, truthful, faithful strong of mind,
For the love he bears thee, Rama, spurns each joy of baser kind,

' False he proves unto his father who is led by mother's wile,'—
Vain this ancient impious adage—Bharat spurns his mother's guile,

Bharat's mother Queen Kaikeyi, Dasa-ratha's royal spouse,
Deep in craft, hath brought disaster on Ayodhya's royal house ! ”

“ Speak not thus,” so Rama answered, “ on Kaikeyi cast no blame,
Honour still the righteous Bharat, honour still the royal dame,

Fixed in purpose and unchanging still in jungle wilds I roam,
But thy accents, gentle Lakshman, wake a longing for my home !

And my loving mem'ry lingers on each word from Bharat fell,
Sweeter than the draught of nectar, purer than the crystal well,

And my righteous purpose falters, shaken by a brother's love,
May we meet again our brother, if it please the Gods above ! ”

Waked by love, a silent tear-drop fell on Godavari's wave,
True once more to righteous purpose Rama's heart was calm and brave,

Rama plunged into the river 'neath the morning's crimson beam,
Sita softly sought the waters as the lily seeks the stream,

And they prayed to Gods and Fathers with each rite and duty done,
And they sang the ancient *mantra* to the red and rising Sun,

With her lord, in loosened tresses Sita to her cottage came,
As with RUDRA wanders UMA in Kailasa's hill of fame !

BOOK VI

SITA-HARANA

(*Sita Lost*)

WE exchange the quiet life of Rama in holy hermitages for the more stirring incidents of the Epic in this Book. The love of a Raksha princess for Rama and for Lakshman in rejected with scorn, and smarting under insult and punishment she fires her brother Ravan, the king of Ceylon, with a thirst for vengeance. The dwellers of Ceylon are described in the Epic as monsters of various forms, and able to assume different shapes at will. Ravan sends Maricha in the shape of a beautiful deer to tempt away Rama and Lakshman from the cottage, and then finds his chance for stealing away the unprotected Sita.

The misfortunes of our lives, according to Indian thinkers, are but the result of our misdeeds ; calamities are brought about by our sins. And thus we find in the Indian Epic, that a dark and foul suspicion against Lakshman crossed the stainless mind of Sita, and words of unmerited insult fell from her gentle lips, on the eve of the great calamity which clouded her life ever after. It was the only occasion on which the ideal woman of the Epic harboured an unjust thought or spoke an angry word ; and it was followed by a tragic fate which few women on earth have suffered. To the millions of men and women in India, Sita remains to this day the ideal of female love and female devotion ; her dark suspicions against Lakshman sprang out of an excess of her affection for her husband ; and her tragic fate and long trial proved that undying love.

The portions translated in this Book form the whole or the main portions of Sections xvii., xviii., xliii., xlv., xlv., xlvii., and xlix. of Book iii. of the original text.

I

Surpa-nakha in Love

As the Moon with starry Chitra dwells in azure skies above,
In his lonesome leafy cottage Rama dwelt in Sita's love,

And with Lakshman strong and valiant, quick to labour and obey,
Tales of bygone times recounting Rama passed the livelong day.

And it so befell, a maiden, dweller of the darksome wood,
Led by wand'ring thought or fancy once before the cottage stood,

Surpa-nakha, Raksha maiden, sister of the Raksha lord,
Came and looked with eager longing till her soul was passion-stirred !

Looked on Rama lion-chested, mighty-armed, lotus-eyed,
Stately as the jungle tusker, with his crown of tresses tied,

Looked on Rama lofty-fronted, with a royal visage graced,
Like KANDARPA young and lustrous, lotus-hued and lotus-faced !

What though she a Raksha maiden, poor in beauty plain in face,
Fell her glances passion-laden on the prince of peerless grace,

What though wild her eyes and tresses, and her accents counselled fear,
Soft-eyed Rama fired her bosom, and his sweet voice thrilled her ear,

What though bent on deeds unholy, holy Rama won her heart,
And, for love makes bold a female, thus did she her thoughts impart :

" Who be thou in hermit's vestments, in thy native beauty bright,
Friend'ed by a youthful woman, armed with thy bow of might,

Who be thou in these lone regions where the Rakshas hold their sway,
Wherefore in a lonely cottage in this darksome jungle stay ? "

With his wonted truth and candour Rama spake sedate and bold,
And the story of his exile to the Raksha maiden told :

"Dasa-ratha of Ayodhya ruled with INDRA's godlike fame,
And his eldest, first born Rama, by his mandate here I came,

Younger Lakshman strong and valiant doth with me these forests roam,
And my wife, Videha's daughter, Sita makes with me her home.

Duteous to my father's bidding, duteous to my mother's will,
Striving in the cause of virtue in the woods we wander still,

Tell me, female of the forest, who thou be and whence thy birth,
Much I fear thou art a Raksha wearing various forms on earth!"

"Listen," so spake Surpa-nakha, "if my purpose thou wouldst know,
I am Raksha, Surpa-nakha, wearing various shapes below,

Know my brothers, royal Ravan, Lanka's lord from days of old,
Kumbha-karna dread and dauntless, and Bibhishan true and bold,

Khara and the doughty Dushan with me in these forests stray,
But by Rama's love emboldened I have left them on the way!

Broad and boundless is my empire and I wander in my pride,
Thee I choose as lord and husband,—cast thy human wife aside,

! Pale is Sita and mis-shapen, scarce a warrior's worthy wife,
! To a nobler, lordlier female consecrate thy gallant life!

Human flesh is food of Rakshas! weakling Sita I will slay,
Slay that boy by thy stripling brother—thee as husband I obey,

On the peaks of lofty mountains, in the forests dark and lone,
We shall range the boundless woodlands and the joys of dalliance
prove!"

II.

Surpa-nakha Punished

Rama heard her impious purpose and a gentle smile repressed,
To the foul and forward female thus is mocking words addressed :

" List, O passion-smitten maiden ! Sita is my honoured wife,
With a rival loved and cherished cruel were thy wedded life !

But no consort follows Lakshman, peerless is his comely face,
Dauntless is his warlike valour, matchless is his courtly grace,

And he leads no wife or consort to this darksome woodland grove,
With no rival to thy passion seek his ample-hearted love !"

Surpa-nakha passion-laden then on Lakshman turned her eye,
But in merry mocking accents smiling Lakshman made reply :

" Ruddy in thy youthful beauty like the lotus in her pride,
I am slave of royal Rama, would'st thou be a vassal's bride ?

Rather be his younger consort, banish Sita from his arms,
Spurning Sita's faded beauty let him seek thy fresher charms,

Spurning Sita's faded graces let him brighter pleasures prove,
Wearied with a woman's dalliance let him court a Raksha's love !"

Wrath of unrequited passion raged like madness in her breast,
Torn by anger strong as tempest thus her answer she address :

" Are these mocking accents uttered, Rama, to insult my flame,
Feasting on her faded beauty dost thou still revere thy dame ?

But beware a Raksha's fury and an injured female's wrath,
Surpa-nakha slays thy consort, bears no rival in her path !"

Fawn-eyed Sita fell in terror as the Raksha rose to slay,
So beneath the flaming meteor sinks Robini's softer ray,

And like Demon of Destruction furious Surpa-nakha came,
Rama rose to stop the slaughter and protect his helpless dame.

"Brother, we have acted wrongly, for with those of savage breed,
Word in jest is courting danger,—this the penance of our deed,

Death perchance or death-like stupor hovers o'er my loved dame,
Let me wake to life my Sita, chase this female void of shame!"

Lakshman's anger leaped like lightning as the female hovered near,
With his sword the wrathful warrior cleft her nose and either ear,

Surpa-nakha in her anguish raised her accents shrill and high,
And the rocks and wooded valleys answered back the dismal cry,

Khara and the doughty Dushan heard the far-resounding wail,
Saw her red disfigured visage, heard her sad and woeful tale!

III

Rama's Departure

Vainly fought the vengeful Khara, doughty Dushan vainly bled,
Rama and the valiant Lakshman strewed the forest with the dead,

Till the humbled Surpa-nakha to her royal brother hied,
Spake her sorrows unto Ravan and Maricha true and tried.

Shape of deer unmatched in beauty now the deep Maricha wore,
Golden tints upon his haunches, sapphire on his antlers bore,

Till the woodland-wand'ring Sita marked the creature in his pride,
Golden was his neck of beauty, silver white his flank and side!

"Come, my lord and gallant Lakshman," thus the raptur'd Sita spake,
"Mark the deer of wondrous radiance browsing by the forest brake!"

"Much my heart misgives me, sister," Lashkshman hesitated still,
"Tis some deep deceitful Raksha wearing every shape at will,

Monarchs wand'rings in this forest, hunting in this lonely glen,
Oft waylaid by artful Rakshas are by deep devices slain,

Bright as day-god, or *Gandharva*, woodland scenes they love to stray,
Till they fall upon the heedless, quick to slaughter and to slay,

'Trust me, not in jewelled lustre forest creatures haunt the green,
'Tis some *maya* and illusion, trust not what thy eyes have seen !

Vainly spake the watchful Lakshman in the arts of Rakshas skilled,
For with forceful fascination Sita's inmost heart was thrilled,

"Husband, good and ever gracious," sweetly thus implored the wife,
"I would tend this thing of beauty,—sharer of my forest life !

I have witnessed in this jungle graceful creatures passing fair,
Chowri and the gentle roebuck, antelope of beauty rare,

I have seen the lithesome monkey sporting in the branches' shade,
Grizzly bear that feeds on *Muhua*, and the deer that crops the blade,

I have marked the stately wild bull dashed into the deepest wood,
And the *Kinnar* strange and wondrous as in sylvan wilds he stood,

But these eyes have never rested on a form so wondrous fair,
On a shape so full of beauty, decked with tints so rich and rare !

Bright his bosom gem-hespangled, soft the lustre of his eye,
Lighting up the gloomy jungle as the Moon lights up the sky,

And his gentle voice and glances and his graceful steps and light,
Fill my heart with eager longing and my soul with soft delight !

If alive that beauteous object thou canst capture in thy way,
As thy Sita's sweet companion in these woodlands he will stay,

And when done our days of exile, to *Ayodhya* will repair,
Dwell in Sita's palace chamber nursed by Sita's tender care,

And our royal brother Bharat oft will praise his strength and speed,
And the queens and royal mothers pause the gentle thing to feed !

If alive this wary creature be it, husband, hard to take,
Slay him and his skin of lustre cherish for thy Sita's sake,

I will as a golden carpet spread the skin upon the grass,
Sweet memento of this forest when our forest days will pass !

Pardon if an eager longing which befits a woman ill,
And an unknown fascination doth my inmost bosom fill,

As I mark his skin bespangled and his antlers' sapphire ray,
And his coat of starry radiance glowing in the light of day ! "

Rama bade the faithful Lakshman with the gentle Sita stay,
Long through woods and gloomy gorges vainly held his cautious way,

Vainly set the snare in silence by the lake and in the dale,
'Scaping every trap, Maricha, pierced by Rama's arrows fell,

Imitating Rama's accents uttered forth his dying cry :
"Speed, my faithful brother Lakshman, helpless in the woods I die ! "

IV

Lakshman's Departure

"Heardst that distant cry of danger ? " questioned Sita in distress,
"Woe, to me ! who in my frenzy sent my lord to wilderness,

Speed, brave Lakshman, help my Rama, doleful was his distant cry,
And my fainting bosom falters and a dimness clouds my eye !

To the dread and darksome forest with thy keenest arrows speed,
Help thy elder and thy monarch, sore his danger and his need,

For perchance the cruel Rakshas gather round his lonesome path,
As the mighty bull is slaughtered by the lions in their watch ! "

Spake the hero : "Fear not, Sita ! Dwellers of the azure height,
Rakshas nor the jungle-rangers match the peerless Rama's might,

Rama knows no dread or danger, and his mandate still I own,
I may not leave thee, Lady, in this cottage all alone !

Cast aside thy causeless terror ; in the sky or earth below,
In the nether regions, Rama knows no peer or equal foe,

He shall slay the deer of jungle, he shall voice no dastard cry,
'Tis some trick of wily Rakshas in this forest dark and high !

Sita, thou hast heard my elder bid me in this cottage stay,
Lakshman may not leave thee, Lady, for his duty—to obey,

Ruthless Rakshas roam the forest to revenge their leader slain,
Various are their arts and accents ; chase thy thought of causeless pain !”

Sparkled Sita's eye in anger, frenzy marked her speech and word,
For a woman's sense is clouded by the danger of her lord :

“ Markest thou my Rama's danger with a cold and callous heart,
Courtdest thou the death of elder in thy deep deceitful art,

In thy semblance of compassion doest thou hide a cruel craft,
As in friendly guise the foeman hides his death-compelling shaft,

Following like a faithful younger in this dread and lonesome land,
Seekest thou the death of elder to enforce his widow's hand ?

False thy hope as foul thy purpose ! Sita is a faithful wife,
Sita follows saintly Rama, true in death as true in life !”

Quivered Lakshman's frame in anguish and the tear stood in his eye,
Fixed in faith and pure in purpose, calm and bold he made reply :

“ Unto me a Queen and Goddess,—as a mother to a son,—
Answer to thy heedless censure patient Lakshman speaketh none,

Daughter of Videha's monarch,—pardon if I do thee wrong,—
Fickle is the faith of woman, poison-dealing is her tongue !

And thy censure, trust me, Lady, scathes me like a burning dart,
Free from guile is Lakshman's purpose, free from sin is Lakshman's heart,

Witness ye my truth of purpose, unseen dwellers of the wood,
Witness, I for Sita's safety by my elder's mandate stood,

Duteous to my queen and elder, I have toiled and worked in vain,
Dark suspicion and dishonour cast on me a needless stain !

*Lady ! I obey thy mandate, to my elder now I go,
Guardian Spirits of the forest watch thee from each secret foe,*

*Omens dark and signs of danger meet my pained and aching sight,
May I see thee by thy Rama, guarded by his conquering might ! "*

V

Ravan's Coming

Ravan watched the happy moment burning with a vengeful spite,
Came to sad and sorrowing Sita in the guise of anchorite,

Tufted hair and russet garment, sandals on his feet he wore,
And depending from his shoulders on a staff his vessel bore.

And he came to lonely Sita, for each warlike chief was gone,
As the darkness comes to evening lightless from the parted Sun,

And he cast his eyes on Sita, as a *graha* casts its shade
On the beauteous star Rohini when the bright Moon's glories fade.

Quaking Nature knew the moment ; silent stood the forest trees,
Conscious of a deed of darkness fell the fragrant forest breeze,

Godavari's troubled waters trembled 'neath his lurid glance,
And his red eye's fiery lustre sparkled in the wavelets' dance !

Mute and still were forest creatures when in guise of anchorite,
Unto Sita's lonely cottage pressed the Raksha in his might,

Mute and voiceless was the jungle as he cast on her his eye,
As across the star of Chitra, planet Sani walks the sky !

Ravan stood in hermit's vestments,—vengeful purpose unrevealed,—
As a deep and darksome cavern is by grass and leaf concealed,

Ravan stood sedate and silent, and he gazed on Rama's queen,
Ivory brow and lip of coral, sparkling teeth of pearly sheen !

Lighting up the lonely cottage Sita sat in radiance high,
As the Moon with streaks of silver fills the lonely midnight sky,

Lighting up the gloomy woodlands with her eyes serenely fair,
With her bark-clad shape of beauty mantled by her raven hair !

Ravan fired by impure passion fixed on her his lustful eye,
And the light that lit his glances gave his holy texts the lie,

Ravan in his flattering accents, with a soft and soothing art,
Praised the woman's peerless beauty to subdue the woman's heart :

" Beaming in thy golden beauty, robed in sylvan russet dress,
Wearing wreath of fragrant lotus like a nymph of wilderness,

Art thou *Sri* or radiant *Gauri*, maid of Fortune or of Fame,
'Nymph of Love or sweet *Fruition*, what may be thy sacred name ?

On thy lips of ruddy coral teeth of tender jasmine shine,
In thy eyes of limpid lustre dwells a light of love divine,

Tall and slender, softly rounded, are thy limbs of beauty rare,
Like the swelling fruit of *tala* heaves thy bosom sweetly fair !

Smiling lips that tempt and ravish, lustre that thy dark eyes beam,
Crush my heart, as rolling waters crush the margin of the stream,

And thy wealth of waving tresses mantles o'er thy budding charms,
And thy waist of slender beauty courts a lover's circling arms !

Goddess or Gandharva maiden wears no brighter form or face,
Woman seen by eyes of mortals owns not such transcendent grace,

Wherefore then, in lonesome forest, nymph or maiden, make thy stay,
Where the jungle creatures wander and the Rakshas hold they sway?

Royal halls and stately mansions were for thee a meet home,
And thy steps should grace a palace, not in pathless forest roam,

Blossoms rich, not thorn of jungle, decorate a lady's bower,
Silken robes, not sylvan garments, heighten Beauty's potent power!

Lady of the sylvan forest! other destiny is thine,—
As a bride beloved and courted in thy bridal garments shine,

Choose a loved and lordly suitor who shall wait on thee in pride!
Choose a hero worth thy beauty, be a monarch's queenly bride!

Speak thy lineage, heaven-descended! who may be thy parents high,
Rudras or the radiant *Maruts*, *Vasus* leaders of the sky,

All unworthy is this forest for a nymph or heavenly maid,
Beasts of prey infest the jungle, Rakshas haunt its gloomy shade,

Lions dwell in lovely caverns, tusked ford the silent lake,
Monkeys sport on pendant branches, tigers steal beneath the brake,

Wherefore then this dismal forest doth thy fairy face adorn,
Who art thou and whence descended, nymph or maid or goddess-born?"

VI

Ravan's Wooing

"Listen, Brahman!" answered Sita,—unsuspecting in her mind
That she saw a base betrayer in a hermit seeming kind—

"I am born of royal Janak, ruler of Videha's land,
Rama prince of proud Kosala by his valour won my hand.

Years we passed in peaceful pleasure in Ayodhya's happy clime,
Rich in every rare enjoyment gladsome passed our happy time,

Till the monarch Dasa-ratha, — for his days were almost done, —
Wished to crown the royal Rama as his Heir and Regent son.

But the scheming Queen Kaikeyi claimed a long-forgotten boon,
That my consort should be exiled and her son should fill the throne,

She would take no rest or slumber, nourishment of drink or food,
Till her Bharat ruled the empire, Rama banished to the wood !

Five and twenty righteous summers graced my good and gracious lord,
True to faith and true to duty, true in purpose deed and word,

Loved of all his loyal people, rich in valour and in fame,
For the rite of consecration Rama to his father came.

Spake Kaikeyi to my husband :— ' List thy father's promise fair,
Bharat shall be ruling monarch, do thou to the woods repair, '—

Ever gentle, ever duteous, Rama listened to obey,
And through woods and pathless jungles we have held our lonely way !

This, O pious-hearted hermit, is his story of distress,
And his young and faithful brother follows him in wilderness,

Lion in his warlike valour, hermit in his saintly vow,
Lakshman with his honoured elder wanders through the forest now.

Rest thee here, O holy Brahman, rich in piety and fame,
Till the forest-ranging brothers greet thee with the forest game,

Speak, if so it please thee, father, what great *rishi* claims thy birth,
Wherefore in this pathless jungle wand'rest friendless on this earth."

" Brahman nor a righteous *rishi*," royal Ravan made reply,
" Leader of the wrathful Rakshas, Lanka's lord and king am I,

He whose valour quells the wide-world, Gods above and men below,
He whose proud and peerless prowess Rakshas and Asuras know !

But thy beauty's golden lustre, Sita, wins my royal heart,
Be a sharer of my empire, of my glory take a part,

Many-queens of queenly beauty on the royal Ravan wait,
Thou shalt be their reigning empress, thou shalt own my regal state!

Lanka girt by boundless ocean is of royal towns the best,
Seated in her pride and glory on a mountain's towering crest,

And in mountain paths and woodlands thou shalt with thy Ravan stray,
Not in Godavari's gorges through the dark and dreary day,

And five thousand gay-dressed damsels shall upon my Sita wait,
Queen of Ravan's true affection, proud partaker of his state!"

Sparkled Sita's eyes in anger and a tremor shook her frame,
As in proud and scornful accents answered thus the royal dame:

Knowest thou Rama great and godlike, peerless hero in the strife,
Deep, uncompassed, like the ocean?—I am Rama's wedded wife!

Knowest thou Rama proud and princely, sinless in his saintly life,
Stately as the tall *Nyagrodha*?—I am Rama's wedded wife!

Mighty-armed, mighty-chested, mighty with his bow and sword,
Lion midst the sons of mortals,—Rama is my wedded lord!

Stainless as the Moon in glory, stainless in his deed and word,
Rich in valour and in virtue,—Rama is my wedded lord!

Sure thy fitful life is shadowed by a dark and dreadful fate,
Since in frenzy of thy passion courttest thou a warrior's mate,

Tear the tooth of hungry lion while upon the calf he feeds,
Touch the fang of deadly cobra while his dying victim bleeds,

Aye uproot the solid mountain from its base of rocky land,
Ere thou win the wife of Rama stout of heart and strong of hand!

Pierce thy eye with point of needle till it racks thy tortured head,
Press thy red tongue cleft and bleeding on the razor's shining blade,

Hurl thyself upon the ocean from a towering peak and high,
Snatch the orbs of day and midnight from their spheres in azure sky,

Tongues of flaming conflagration in thy flowing dress enfold,
Ere thou take the wife of Rama to thy distant dungeon hold,

Ere thou seek to insult Rama unrelenting in his wrath,
O'er a bed of pikes of iron tread a softer easier path ! "

VII

Ravan's Triumph

Vain her threat and soft entreaty, Ravan held her in his wrath,
As the planet Budha captures fair Rohini in his path,

By his left hand tremor-shaken, Ravan held her streaming hair,
By his right the ruthless Raksha lifted up the fainting fair !

Unseen dwellers of the woodlands watched the dismal deed of shame,
Marked the mighty-armed Raksha lift the poor and helpless dame,

Seal her on his car celestial yoked with asses winged with speed,
Golden in its shape and radiance, fleet as INDRA'S heavenly steed !

Angry threat and sweet entreaty Ravan to her ears addressed,
As the struggling fainting woman still he held upon his breast,

Vain his threat and vain entreaty, " Rama ! Rama ! " still she cried,
To the dark and distant forest where her noble lord had hied.

Then arose the car celestial o'er the hill and wooded vale,
Like a snake in eagle's talons Sita writhed with piteous wail,

Dim and dizzy, faint and faltering, still she went her piercing cry,
Echoing through the boundless woodlands, pealing to the upper sky :

"Save me, mighty-armed Lakshman, stainless in thy heart and deed,
Save a faithful wife and woman from a Raksha's lust and greed,

True and faithful was thy warning, —false and foul the charge I made,
Pardon, friend, an erring sister, pardon words a woman said !

Help me, ever righteous Rama, duty bade thee yield thy throne,
Duty bids thee smite the sinful, save the wife who is thy own,

Thou art king and stern chastiser of each deed of sin and shame,
Hurl thy vengeance on the Raksha who insults thy faithful dame !

*Deed of sin, unrighteous Ravan, brings in time its dreadful meed,
As the young corn grows and ripens from the small and living seed,*

*For this deed of insult, Ravan, in thy heedless folly done,
Death of all thy race and kindred thou shalt reap from Raghu's son !*

Darksome woods of Panchavati, Janasthana's smiling vale,
Flowering trees and winding creepers, murmur to my lord this tale,

Sweet companions of my exile, friends who cheered my woodland stay,
Speak to Rama, that his Sita ruthless Ravan bears away !

Towering peaks and lofty mountains, wooded hills sublime and high,
Far-extending gloomy ranges heaving to the azure sky,

In your voice of pealing thunder to my lord and consort say,
Speak to Rama, that his Sita ruthless Ravan bears away !

Unseen dwellers of the woodlands, spirits of the rock and fell,
Sita renders you obeisance as she speaks her sad farewell,

Whisper to my righteous Rama when he seeks his homeward way,
Speak to Rama, that his Sita ruthless Ravan bears away !

Ah, my Rama, true and tender ! thou hast loved me as thy life,
From the foul and impious Raksha thou shalt still redeem thy wife,

Ah, my Rama, mighty-armed ! vengeance soon shall speed thy way,
When thou hearest, helpless Sita is by Ravan torn away !

And thou royal bird, Jatayu, witness Ravan's deed of shame,
Witness how he courts destruction, stealing Rama's faithful dame,

Rama and the gallant Lakshman soon shall find their destined prey,
When they know that trusting Sita is by Ravan torn away ! "

Vainly wept the anguished Sita ; vain Jatayu in his wrath,
Fought with beak and bloody talons to impede the Raksha's path,

Pierced and bleeding fell the vulture ; Ravan fled with Rama's bride,
Where amidst the boundless ocean Lanka rose in towering pride !

BOOK VII

KISHKINDHA

(In the Nilgiri Mountains)

RAMA'S wanderings in the Nilgiri mountains, and his alliance with Sugriva the chief of these regions, form the subject of the Book. With that contempt for aboriginal races which has marked civilized conquerors in all ages, the poet describes the dwellers of these regions as monkeys and bears. But the modern reader, sees through these strange epithets; and in the description of the social and domestic manners, the arts and industries, the sacred rites and ceremonies, and the civic and political life of the Vanars, the reader will find that the poet even imports Aryan customs into his account of the dwellers of Southern India. They formed an alliance with Rama, they fought for him and triumphed with him, and they helped him to recover his wife from the king of Ceylon.

The portions translated in this Book form Sections v., xv., xvi., xxvi., a portion of Section xxviii., and an abstract of Sections xl. to xliii. of Book iv. of the original text.

I

Friend's in Misfortune

Long and loud lamented Rama by his lonesome cottage door,
Janasthana's woodlands answered, Panchavati's echoing shore,

Long he searched in wood and jungle, mountain crest and pathless plain,
Till he reached the Malya mountains stretching to the southern main.

There Sugriva king of Vanars, Hanuman his henchman brave,
 Banished from their home and empire lived within the forest cave,

To the exiled king Sugriva, Hanuman his purpose told,
 As he marked the pensive Rama wand'ring with his brother bold :

Mark the sons of Dasa-ratha banished from their royal home,
 Obedient to their father's mandate in these pathless forests roam,

Great was monarch Dasa-ratha famed for sacrifice divine,
Raja-suya Aswa-medha, and for gift of gold and kine,

By a monarch's stainless duty people's love the monarch won,
 By a woman's false contrivance banished he his eldest son !

True to duty, true to virtue, Rama passed his forest life,
 Till a false perfidious Raksha stole his fair and faithful wife,

And the anguish-stricken husband seeks thy friendship and thy aid,—
 Mutual sorrow blends your fortunes, be ye friends in mutual need ! ”

Bold Sugriva heard the counsel, and to righteous Rama hied,
 And the princes of Ayodhya with his greetings gratified :

*“ Well I know thee, righteous Rama, soul of piety and love,
 And thy duty to thy father and thy faith in Gods above,*

*Fortune favours poor Sugriva, Rama courts his humble aid,
 In our deepest direst danger be our truest friendship made !*

*Equal is our fateful fortune,—I have lost a queenly wife,
 Banished from Kishkindha's empire here I lead a forest life,*

*Pledge of love and true alliance, Rama, take this proffered hand,
 Banded by a common sorrow we shall fall or stoutly stand ! ”*

Rama grasped the hand he offered, and the tear was in his eye,
 And they swore undying friendship o'er the altar blazing high,

Hanuman with fragrant blossoms sanctified the sacred rite,
 And the comrades linked by sorrow walked around the altar's light,

And their word and troth they plighted : "In our happiness and woe,
We are friends in thought and action, we will face our common foe !"

And they broke a leafy *Sal* tree, spread it underneath their feet,
Rama and his friend Sugriva sat upon the common seat,

And a branch of scented *Chandan* with its tender blossoms graced,
Hanuman as seat of honour for the faithful Lakshman placed,

"Listen, Rama," spake Sugriva, "reft of kingdom, reft of wife,
Fleeing to these rugged mountains I endure a forest life,

For my tyrant brother Bali rules Kishkindha all alone,
Forced my wife from my embraces, drove me from my father's throne,

Trembling in my fear and anguish I endure a life of woe,
Render me my wife and empire from my brother and my foe !"

"Not in vain they seek my succour," so the gallant Rama said,
"Who with love and offered friendship seek my counsel and my aid,

Not in vain these glistening arrows in my ample quiver shine,
Bali dies the death of tyrants, wife and empire shall be thine !

*Quick as INDRA'S forked lightning are these arrows feather-plumed,
Deadly as the hissing serpent are these darts with points illumed,*

*And this day shall not be ended ere it sees thy brother fall,
As by lurid lightning severed sinks the crest of mountain tall !"*

II

The Counsel of Tara

Linked in bonds of faithful friendship Rama and Sugriva came,
Where in royal town Kishkindha, Bali ruled with warlike fame,

And a shout like troubled ocean's or like tempest's deafening roar
Spake Sugriva's mighty challenge to the victor king once more !

ali knew that proud defiance shaking sky and solid ground,
and like sun by eclipse shaded, dark and pale he looked around,

and his teeth were set in anger and a passion lit his eye,
as a tempest stirs a torrent when its lilies scattered lie,

and he rose in wrath terrific with a thought of vengeance dread,
and the firm earth shook and trembled 'neath his proud and haughty
tread !

But the true and tender Tara held her husband and her lord,
and a woman's deeper wisdom spake in woman's loving word :

Wherefore like a rain-fed torrent swells thy passion in its sway,
thoughts of wrath like withered blossoms from thy bosom cast away,

Wait till dawns another morning, wait till thou dost truly know,
With what strength and added forces comes again thy humbled foe,

Crushed in combat faint Sugriva fled in terror and in pain,
Trust me, not without a helper comes he to the fight again,

Trust me, lord, that loud defiance is no coward's falt'ring cry,
Conscious strength not hesitation speaks in voice so proud and high !

Such my woman's heart misgives me, not without a mighty aid,
Not without a daring comrade comes Sugriva to this raid,

Not with feeble friend Sugriva seeks alliance in his need,
Nor invokes a powerless chieftain in his lust and in his greed.

Fighty is his royal comrade,—listen, husband, to my word,
What my son in forest confines from his messengers hath heard,—

Princes from Ayodhya's country peerless in the art of war,
Rama and the valiant Lakshman in these forests wander far,

Much I fear, these matchless warriors have their aid and counsel lent
Unconscious of his strength Sugriva hath this proud defiance sent !

To his foes resistless Rama is a lightning from above,
To his friends a tree of shelter, soul of tenderness and love,

Dearer than his love of glory is his love to heal and bless,
Dearer than the crown and empire is his hermit's holy dress,

Not with such, my lord and husband, seek a vain unrighteous strife,
For, like precious ores in mountains, virtues dwell in Rama's life.

Make Sugriva thy companion, make him Regent and thy Heir,
Discord with a younger brother rends an empire broad and fair,

Make thy peace with young Sugriva, nearest and thy dearest kin,
Brother's love is truest safety, brother's hate is deadliest sin !

Trust me, monarch of Kishkindha, trust thy true and faithful wife,
Thou shalt find no truer comrade than Sugriva in thy life,

Wage not then a war fraternal, smite him not in sinful pride,
As a brother and a warrior let him stand by Bali's side.

Listen to thy Tara's counsel if to thee is Tara dear,
If thy wife is true in duty scorn not Tara's wifely tear,

Not with Rama prince of virtue wage a combat dread and high,
Not with Rama prince of valour, peerless like the Lord of sky ! "

III

The Fall of Bali

Star-eyed Tara softly counselled pressing to her consort's side,
Mighty Bali proudly answered with a warrior's lofty pride :

" Challenge of a humbled foeman and a younger's haughty scorn
May not, shall not, tender Tara, by a king be meekly borne !

He turns not from encounter even with his dying breath,
 Sult from a foe, unanswered, is a deeper stain than death,

And Sugriva's quest for combat Bali never shall deny,
 Though sustained by Rama's forces and by Rama's prowess high !

Free me from thy sweet embraces and amidst thy maids retire,
 Woman's love and soft devotion woman's timid thoughts inspire,

Far not, Tara, blood of brother Bali's honour shall not stain,
 Will quell his proud presumption, chase him from this realm again,

Free me from thy loving dalliance, midst thy damsels seek thy place,
 Till I come a happy victor to my Tara's fond embrace !"

Low and sad with sweet obeisance Tara stepped around her lord,
 Welling tear-drops choked her accents as she prayed in stifled word,

Low and sad with swelling bosom Tara with her maids retired,
 Bali issued proud and stately with the thought of vengeance fired !

Hissing like an angry cobra, city's lofty gates he past,
 And his proud and angry glances fiercely all around he cast,

Till he saw the bold Sugriva, gold-complexioned, red with ire,
 Armed for the dubious combat, flaming like the forest fire !

Bali braced his warlike garments and his hand he lifted high,
 Bold Sugriva raised his right arm with a proud and answering cry,

Bali's eyes were red as copper and his chain was burnished gold,
 To his brother bold Sugriva thus he spake in accents bold :

"Mark this iron fist, intruder, fatal is its vengeful blow,
 Crushed and smitten thou shalt perish and to nether world shalt go,"

"Nay that fate awaits thee, Bali," spake Sugriva armed for strife,
 "When this right arm smites thy forehead, from thy bosom rends thy
 life !"

Closed the chiefs in fatal combat, each resistless in his pride,
 And like running rills from mountains poured their limbs the purple tide,

Till Sugriva quick uprooting *Sal* tree from the jungle wood,
As the dark cloud hurls the lightning, hurled it where his brother stood

Staggering 'neath the blow terrific Bali reeled and almost fell,
As a proud ship overladen reels upon the ocean's swell !

But with fiercer rage and fury Bali in his anguish rose,
And with mutual blows they battled,—brothers and relentless foes,

Like the sun and moon in conflict or like eagles in their fight,
Still they fought with cherished hatred and an unforgotten spite,

Till with mightier force and fury Bali did his younger quell,
Faint Sugriva fiercely struggling 'neath his brother's prowess fell !

Still the wrathful rivals wrestled with their bleeding arms and knees,
With their nails like claws of tigers and with riven rocks and trees,

And as INDRA battles Vritra in the tempest's pealing roar,
Blood-stained Bali, red Sugriva, strove and struggled, fought and tore,

Till Sugriva faint and faltering fell like Vritra from the sky,
To his comrade and his helper turned his faint and pleading eye !

Ah ! those soft and pleading glances smote the gentle Rama's heart,
On his bow of ample stature Rama raised the fatal dart,

Like the fatal disc of YAMA was his proudly circled bow,
Like a snake of deadly poison flew his arrow swift and low,

Winged dwellers of the forest heard the twang with trembling fear,
Echoing woods gave back the accent, lightly fled the startled deer,

And as INDRA's flag is lowered when the Aswin winds prevail,
Lofty Bali pierced and bleeding by that fatal arrow fell !

IV

The Consecration of Sugriva

Years of love the tender Tara on her slaughtered hero shed,
 'en Sugriva's bosom melted when he saw his brother dead,

And each Vanar chief and warrior, *maha-matra*, lord and peer,
 Gathered round the sad Sugriva wet with unavailing tear !

And they girt the victor Rama and they praised his wond'rous might,
 As the heavenly *rishis* gather circling BRAHMA's throne of light,

Hanuman of sun-like radiance, lofty as a hill of gold,
 Clasped his hands in due obeisance, spake in accents calm and bold :

"By thy prowess, peerless Rama, prince Sugriva is our lord,
 To his father's throne and empire, to his father's town restored,

Cleansed by bath and fragrant unguents and in royal garments gay,
 He shall with his gold and garlands homage to the victor pay,

To the rock-bound fair Kishkindha do thy friendly footsteps bend,
 And as monarch of the Vanars consecrate thy grateful friend !"

"Fourteen years," so Rama answered, "by his father's stern command,
 In a city's sacred confines banished Rama may not stand,

Friend and comrade, brave Sugriva, enter thou the city wall,
 And assume the royal sceptre in thy father's royal hall,

Gallant Angad, son of Bali, is in regal duties trained,
 Ruling partner of thy empire be the valiant prince ordained,

Eldest son of eldest brother,—such the maxim that we own,—
 Worthy of his father's kingdom, doth ascend his father's throne.

Listen ! 'tis the month of *Sravan*, now begins the yearly rain,
 In these months of wind and deluge thoughts of vengeful strife were vain

Enter then thy royal city, fair Kishkindha
With my ever faithful Lakshman let me in

Spacious is yon rocky cavern fragrant with
Bright with lily and with lotus, watered by

Here we dwell till month of *Kartik* when
And the time of war and vengeance on our

Bowing to the victor's mandate brave Sugri
And the host of thronging Vanars entered

Prostrate chiefs with due obeisance rendere
And Sugriva blessed his people, stepped wi

And they sprinkled sacred water from the v
And they waved the fan of *chowri*, raised th

And they spread the gold and jewel, grain a
Sapling twigs and bending branches, blossom

Milk-white garments gem-bespangled, and th
Wreaths and spices, snow-white lilies, lotus :

Jatarupa and *Priyangu*, honey, curd and ho
Costly sandals gilt and jewelled, tiger-skin th

Decked in gold and scented garlands, robed
Sweetly stepped around Sugriva sixteen maid

Priests received the royal bounty, gift and ga
And they lit the holy altar with the sacred *m*

And they poured the sweet libation on the al
And on throne of royal splendour placed the

On a high and open terrace with auspicious
Facing eastward, in his glory was the brave S

Water from each holy river, from each *tirtha*
From the broad and boundless ocean, was an

and from vase and horn of wild bull, on their monarch and their lord
 holy consecrating water chiefs and loyal courtiers poured.

Rama and the great Gavaksha, Gandha-madan proud and brave,
 Hanuman held up the vases, Jambavan his succour gave,

and they laved the king Sugriva as Immortals in the sky,
 consecrate the star-eyed INDRA in his mansions bright and high,

and a shout of joy and triumph, like the pealing voice of war,
 make Sugriva's consecration to the creatures near the far !

Obedient still to Rama's mandate, as his first born and his own,
 King Sugriva named young Angad sharer of his royal throne,

Gay and bannered town Kishkindha hailed Sugriva's gracious word,
 tender Tara wiped her tear-drops bowing to a younger lord !

V

The Rains in the Nilgiri Mountains

"Mark the shadowing rain and tempest," Rama to his brother said,
 As on Malya's cloud-capped ranges in their hermit-guise they strayed,

"Massive clouds like rolling mountains gather thick and gather high
 lurid lightnings glint and sparkle, pealing thunders shake the sky,

Pregnant with the ocean moisture by the solar ray instilled,
 Now the skies like fruitful mothers are with grateful waters filled !

Mark the folds of cloudy masses, ladder-like of smooth ascent,
 One could almost reach the Sun-god, wreath him with a wreath of scer

And when glow these heavy masses red and white with evening's glow
 One could almost deem them sword-cuts branded by some heavenly foe

Mark the streaks of golden lustre lighting up the checkered sky,
Like a lover *chandan*-painted in each breeze it heaves a sigh,

And the earth is hot and feverish, moistened with the tears of rain,
Sighing like my anguished Sita when she wept in woe and pain !

Fresh and sweet like draught of nectar is the rain-besprinkled breeze
Fragrant with the *ketak* blossom, scented by the camphor trees,

Fresh and bold each peak and mountain bathed in soft descending rain
So they sprinkle holy water when they bless a monarch's reign !

Fair and tall as holy hermits, stand yon shadow-mantled hills,
Murmuring *mantras* with the zephyr, robed in threads of sparkling rills,

Fair and young as gallant coursers neighing forth their thunder cries,
Lashed by golden whips of lightning are the dappled sunlit skies !

Ah, my lost and loving Sita ! writhing in a Raksha's power,
As the lightning shakes and quivers in this dark tempestuous shower,

Shadows thicken on the prospect, flower and leaf are wet with rain,
And each passing object, Lakshman, wakes in me a thought of pain !

Joyously from throne and empire with my Sita I could part,
As the stream erodes its margin, Sita's absence breaks my heart,

Rain and tempest cloud the prospect as they cloud my onward path,
Dubious is my darksome future, mighty is my foeman's wrath !

Ravan monarch of the Rakshas,—so Jatayu said and died,—
In some unknown forest fastness doth my sorrowing Sita hide,

But Sugriva true and faithful seeks the Raksha's secret hold,
Firm in faith and fixed in purpose we will face our foeman bold !

VI

The Quest for Sita

At the rains, the marshalled Vanars gathered round Sugriva bold,
And unto a gallant chieftain thus the king his purpose told :

Brave in war and wise in counsel ! take ten thousand of my best,
Seek the hiding-place of Ravan in the regions of the East.

Seek each ravine rock and forest and each shadowy hill and cave,
Far where bright Sarayu's waters mix with Ganga's ruddy wave,

And where Jumna's dark blue waters ceaseless roll in regal pride,
And the Sone through leagues of country spreads its torrent far and wide,

Seek where in Videha's empire castled towns and hamlets shine,
In Kosala and in Malwa and by Kasi's sacred shrine,

Magadh rich in peopled centres, Pundra region of the brave,
Anga rich in corn and cattle on the eastern ocean wave.

Seek where clans of skilful weavers dwell upon the eastern shore
And from virgin mines of silver miners work the sparkling ore,

In the realms of uncouth nations, in the islets of the sea,
In the mountains of the ocean, wander far and wander free ! ”

Next to Nila son of AGNI, Jambaman VIDHATA'S son,
Hanuman the son of MARUT, famed for deeds of valour done,

Unto Gaya and Gavaksha, Gandha-madan true and tried,
Unto Angad prince and regent, thus the brave Sugriva cried :

“ Noblest, bravest of our chieftains, greatest of our race are ye,
Seek and search the Southern regions, rock and ravine, wood and tree

Search the thousand peaks of Vindhya lifting high its misty head,
Through the gorges of Narmada rolling o'er its rocky bed,

By the gloomy Godavari and by Krishna's wooded stream,
Through Utkala's sea-girt forests tinged by morning's early gleam

Search the towns of famed Dasarna and Avanti's rocky shore,
And the uplands of Vidarbha and the mountains of Mysore,

Land of Matsyas and Kalingas and Kausika's regions fair,
Trackless wilderness of Dandak seek with anxious toil and care,

Search the empire of the Andhras, of the sister-nations three,—
Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyas dwelling by the southern sea,

Pass Kaveri's spreading waters, Malya's mountains towering brave,
Seek the isle of Tamra-parni, gemmed upon the ocean wave ! ”

To Sasena chief and elder,—Tara's noble sire was he,—
Spake Sugriva with obeisance and in accents bold and free :

“ Take my lord, a countless army of the bravest and the best,
Search where beats the sleepless ocean on the regions of the West.

Search the country of Saurashtras, of Bahlikas strong and brave,
And each busy mart and seaport on the western ocean wave,

Castles girt by barren mountains, deserts by the sandy sea,
Forests of the fragrant *ketak*, regions of the *tamal* tree !

Search the ocean port of Pattan shaded by its fruitful trees,
Where the feathery groves of cocoa court the balmy western breeze,

Where on peaks of Soma-giri lordly lions wander free,
Where the waters of the Indus mingle with the mighty sea ! ”

Lastly to the valiant chieftain Satavala strong and brave,
For the quest of saintly Sita thus his mighty mandate gave ;

Hie thee, gallant Satavala, with thy forces wander forth,
To the peaks of Himalaya, to the regions of the North !

Hechchas and the wild Pulindas in the rocky regions dwell,
Madra chiefs and mighty Kurus live within each fertile vale,

Wild Kambojs of the mountains, Yavanas of wondrous skill,
Sakas swooping from their gorges, Pattanas of iron will !

Search the woods of *devadaru* mantling Himalaya's side,
And the forests of the *lodhra* spreading in their darksome pride,

Search the land of Soma-srama where the gay *Gandharvas* dwell,
In the table land of Kala search each rock and ravine well !

Cross the snowy Himalaya, and Sudarsan's holy peak,
Deva-sakha's wooded ranges which the feathered songsters seek,

Cross the vast and dreary region void of stream or wooded hill,
Till you reach the white Kailasa, home of Gods, serene and still !

Pass Kuvera's pleasant regions, search the Krauncha mountain well,
And the land where warlike females and the horse-faced women dwell,

Halt not till you reach the country where the Northern Kurus rest,
Utmost confines of the wide earth, home of Gods and Spirits blest !”

BOOK VIII

SITA - S A N D E S A

(*Sita Discovered*)

AMONG the many chiefs sent by Sugriva in different directions in search of Sita, Hanuman succeeded in the quest and discovered Sita in Ceylon. Ceylon is separated from India by a broad channel of the sea, and Hanuman leaped, or rather flew through the air, across the channel, and lighted on the island. Sita, scorning the proposals of Ravan, was kept in confinement in a garden of *Asoka* trees, surrounded by a terrible guard of Raksha females; and in this hard confinement she remained true and faithful to her lord. Hanuman gave her a token from Rama, and carried back to Rama a token which she sent of her undying affection and truth.

The portions translated in this Book form the whole of the main portions of Sections xv., xxxi., xxxvi., and lxvi. of Book v. of the original text.

I

Sita in the Asoka Garden

Crossed the ocean's boundless waters, Hanuman in duty brave,
Lighted on the emerald island girdled by the sapphire wave,

And in tireless quest of Sita searched the margin of the sea,
In a dark *Asoka* garden hid himself within a tree.

Creepers threw their clasping tendrils round the trees of ample height,
Stately palm and feathered cocoa, fruit and blossom pleased the sight.

Herds of tame and gentle creatures in the grassy meadow strayed,
Asokas sang in leafy thicket, birds of plumage lit the shade,

Limpid lakes of scented lotus with their fragrance filled the air,
Homes and huts of rustic beauty peeped through bushes green and fair,

Blossoms rich in tint and fragrance in the checkered shadow gleamed,
Clustering fruits of golden beauty in the yellow sunlight beamed !

Brightly shone the red *Asoka* with the morning's golden ray,
Karnikara and *Kinsuka* dazzling as the light of day,

Brightly grew the flower of *Champak* in the vale and on the reef,
Punnaga and *Saptaparna* with its seven-fold scented leaf,

Rich in blossoms many tinted, grateful to the ravished eye,
Gay and green and glorious Lanka was like garden of the sky,

Rich in fruit and laden creeper and in beauteous hush and tree,
Flower-bespangled golden Lanka was like gem-bespangled sea !

Rose a palace in the woodlands girt by pillars strong and high,
Snowy-white like fair Kailasa cleaving through the azure sky,

And its steps were ocean coral and its pavement yellow gold,
White and gay and heaven-aspiring rose the structure high and bold !

By the rich and royal mansion Hanuman his eyes did rest,
On a woman sad and sorrowing in her sylvan garments drest,

Like the moon obscured and clouded, dim with shadows deep and dark,
Like the smoke-enshrined red fire, dying with a feeble spark,

Like the tempest-pelted lotus by the wind and torrent shaken,
Like the beauteous star Rohini by a *graha* overtaken !

Fasts and vigils paled her beauty, tears bedimmed her tender grace,
Anguish dwelt within her bosom, sorrow darkened on her face,

And she lived by Rakshas guarded, as a faint and timid deer,
Severed from her herd and kindred when the prowling wolves are near,

And her raven locks ungathered hung behind in single braid,
And her gentle eye was lightless, and her brow was hid in shade !

" This is she ! the peerless princess, Rama's consort loved and lost,
This is she ! the saintly Sita, by a cruel fortune crost,"

Hanuman thus thought and pondered : " On her graceful form I spy,
Gems and gold by sorrowing Rama oft depicted with a sigh,

On her ears the golden pendants and the tiger's sharpened tooth,
On her arms the jewelled bracelets, tokens of unchanging truth,

On her pallid brow and bosom still the radiant jewels shine,
Rama with a sweet affection did in early days entwine !

Hermit's garments clothe her person, braided is her raven hair,
Matted bark of trees of forest drape her neck and bosom fair,

And a dower of dazzling beauty still bedecks her peerless face,
Though the shadowing tinge of sorrow darkens all her earlier grace !

This is she ! the soft-eyed Sita, wept with unavailing tear,
This is she ! the faithful consort, unto Rama ever dear,

Unforgetting and unchanging, truthful still in deed and word,
Sita in her silent suffering sorrows for her absent lord,

Still for Rama lost but cherished, Sita heaves the choking sigh,
Sita lives for righteous Rama, for her Rama she would die ! "

II

The Voice of Hope

Hanuman from leafy shelter lifts his voice in sacred song,
Till the tale of Rama's glory Lanka's woods and vales prolong :

" Listen, Lady, to my story ;—Dasa-ratha famed in war,
Rich in steeds and royal tuskers, armed men and battle car,

Ruled his realm in truth and virtue, in his bounty ever free,
Of the mighty race of Raghu mightiest king and monarch he,

Robed in every royal virtue, great in peace in battle brave,
Blest in bliss of grateful nations, blest in blessings which he gave !

And his eldest-born and dearest, Rama soul of righteous might,
Saone, as mid the stars resplendent shines the radiant Lord of Night,

True unto his sacred duty, true unto his kith and kin,
Friend of piety and virtue, punisher of crime and sin,

Loved in all his spacious empire, peopled mart and hermit's den,
With a truer deeper kindness Rama loved his subject men !

Dasa-ratha, promise-fettered, then his cruel mandate gave,
Rama with his wife and brother lived in woods and rocky cave,

And he slayed the deer of jungle and he slept in leafy shade,
Stern destroyer of the Rakshas in the pathless forests strayed,

Till the monarch of the Rakshas,—fraudful is his impious life,—
Cheated Rama in the jungle, from his cottage stole his wife !

Long lamenting lone and weary Rama wandered in the wood,
Searched for Sita in the jungle where his humble cottage stood,

Godavari's gloomy gorges, Krishna's dark and wooded shore,
And the ravine, rock and valley, and the cloud-capped mountain hoar !

Then he met the sad Sugriva in wild Malya's dark retreat,
Won for him his father's empire and his father's royal seat,

Now Sugriva's countless forces wander far and wander near,
In the search of stolen Sita still unto his Rama dear!

I am henchman of Sugriva and the mighty sea have crost,
In the quest of hidden Sita, Rama's consort loved and lost,

And methinks that form of beauty, peerless shape of woman's grace,
Is my Rama's dear-loved consort, Rama's dear-remembered face!"

Hushed the voice; the ravished Sita cast her wond'ring eyes around,
Whence that song of sudden gladness, whence that soul-entrancing sound?

Dawning hope and rising rapture overflowed her widowed heart,
Is it dream's deceitful whisper which the cruel Fates impart!

III

Rama's Token

" 'Tis no dream's deceitful whisper!" Hanuman spake to the dame,
As from darksome leafy shelter he to Rama's consort came,

" Rama's messenger and vassal, token from thy lord I bring,
Mark this bright ring, jewel-lettered with the dear name of thy king,

For the loved and cherished Sita is to Rama ever dear,
And he sends his loving message and his force is drawing near!"

Sita held that tender token from her loved and cherished lord,
And once more herself she fancied to his loving arms restored,

And her pallid face was lighted and her soft eye sent a spark,
As the Moon regains her lustre freed from *Rahu's* shadows dark!

And with voice of deep emotion in each softly whispered word,
Spake her thoughts in gentle accents of her consort and her lord :

" Messenger of love of Rama ! Dauntless is thy deed and hold,
Thou hast crossed the boundless ocean to the Raksha's castled hold,

Thou hast crossed the angry billows which confess no monarch's sway,
O'er the face of rolling waters found thy unresisted way,

Thou hast done what living mortal never sought to do before,
Dared the Raksha in his island, Ravan in his sea-girt shore !

Speak, if Rama lives in safety in the woods or by the hill,
And if young and gallant Lakshman faithful serves his brother still,

Speak, if Rama in his anger and his unforgiving ire,
Hurls destruction on my captor like the world-consuming fire,

Speak, if Rama in his sorrow wets his pale and drooping eye,
If the thought of absent Sita wakes within his heart a sigh !

Doth my husband seek alliance with each wild and warlike chief,
Striving for a speedy vengeance and for Sita's quick relief,

Doth he stir the warlike races to a fierce and vengeful strife,
Dealing death to ruthless Rakshas for this insult on his wife,

Doth he still in fond remembrance cherish Sita loved of yore,
Nursing in his hero-bosom tender sorrows evermore ?

Didst thou hear from far Ayodhya, from Kausalya royal dame,
From the true and tender Bharat prince of proud and peerless fame,

Didst thou hear if royal Bharat leads his forces to the fight,
Conquering Ravan's scattered army in his all-resistless might,

Didst thou hear if brave Sugriva marshals Vanars in his wrath,
And the young and gallant Lakshman seeks to cross the ocean path ?"

Hanuman with due obeisance placed his hand upon his head,
Bowed unto to the queenly Sita and in gentle accents said :

"Trust me, Lady, valiant Rama soon will greet his saintly wife,
E'en as INDRA greets his goddess, SACHI dearer than his life,

Trust me, Sita, conquering Rama comes with panoply of war,
Snaking Lankas sea-girt mountains, slaying Rakshas near and far!

He shall cross the boundless ocean with the battles dread array,
He shall smite the impious Ravan and the cruel Rakshas slay,

Mighty Gods and strong Asuras shall not hinder Rama's path,
When at Lanka's gates he thunders with his more than godlike wrath,

Deadly YAMA, all-destroying, pales before his peerless might,
When his red right arm of vengeance wrathful Rama lifts to smite!

By the lofty Mandar mountains, by the fruit and root I seek,
By the cloud-obstructing Vindhya, and by Malya's towering peak,

I will swear, my gentle Lady, Rama's vengeance draweth nigh,
Thou shalt see his beaming visage like the Lord of Midnight Sky,

Firm in purpose Rama waiteth on the Prasra-vana hill,
As upon the huge Airavat, INDRA, motionless and still!

*Flesh of deer nor forest honey tasteth Rama true and bold,
Till he rescues cherished Sita from the Raksha's castled hold,*

*Thoughts of Sita leave not Rama dreary day or darksome night,
Till his vengeance deep and dreadful crushes Ravan in his might,*

*Forest flower nor scented creeper pleases Rama's anguished heart,
Till he wins his wedded consort by his death-compelling dart!"*

IV

Sita's Token

Token from her raven tresses Sita to the Vanar gave,
Hanuman with countless valour crossed once more the ocean wave,

Where in Prasra-vana's mountain Rama with his brother stayed,
Jewel from the brow of Sita by her sorrowing consort laid,

Spoke of Ravan's foul endearment and his loathsome loving word,
Spoke of Sita's scorn and anger and her truth unto her lord,

Tears of sorrow and affection from the warrior's eyelids start,
As his consort's loving token Rama presses to his heart !

" As the mother-cow, Sugriva, yields her milk beside her young,
Welling tears upon this token yields my heart by anguish wrung,

Well I know this dear-loved jewel sparkling with the ray of heaven,
Born in sea, by mighty INDRA to my Sita's father given,

Well I know this tender token, Janak placed it on her hair,
When she came my bride and consort decked in beauty rich and rare,

Well I know this sweet memorial, Sita wore it on her head,
And her proud and peerless beauty on the gem a lustre shed !

Ah, methinks the gracious Janak stands again before my eye,
With a father's fond affection, with a monarch's stature high,

Ah, methinks my bride and consort, she who wore it on her brow,
Stands again before the altar speaks again her loving vow,

Ah, the sad the sweet remembrance ! ah, the happy days gone by,
Once again, O loving vision, wilt thou gladden Rama's eye ?

Speak again, my faithful vassal, how my Sita wept and prayed,
Like the water to the thirsty, dear to me what Sita said,

Did she send this sweet remembrance as a blessing from above,
As a true and tender token of a woman's changeless love,

Did she waft her heart's affection o'er the billows of the sea,
Wherefore came she not in person from her foes and fetters free ?

Hanuman, my friend and comrade, lead me to the distant isle,
Where my soft-eyed Sita lingers midst the Rakshas dark and vile,

Where my true and tender consort like a lone and stricken deer,
Girt by Rakshas stern and ruthless sheds the unavailing tear,

Where she weeps in ceaseless anguish, sorrow-stricken sad and pale,
Like the Moon by dark clouds shrouded then her light and lustre fail !

Speak again, my faithful henchman, loving message of my wife,
Like some potent drug her accents renovate my fainting life,

Arm thy forces, friend Sugriva, Rama shall not brook delay,
While in distant Lanka's confines Sita weeps the livelong day,

Marshal forth thy bannered forces, cross the ocean in thy might,
Rama speeds on wings of vengeance Lanka's impious lord to smite !

BOOK IX

RAVANA-SABHA

(The Council of War)

RAVAN was thoroughly frightened by the deeds of Hanuman. For Hanuman had not only penetrated into his island and discovered Sita in her imprisonment, but had also managed to burn down a great portion of the city before he left the island. Ravan called a Council of War, and as might be expected, all the advisers heedlessly advised war.

All but Bibhishan. He was the youngest brother of Ravan, and condemned the folly and the crime by which Ravan was seeking a war with the righteous and unoffending Rama. He advised that Sita should be restored to her lord and peace made with Rama. His voice was drowned in the cries of more violent advisers.

It is noticeable that Ravan's second brother, Kumbha-karna, also had the courage to censure his elder's actions. But unlike Bibhishan he was determined to fight for his king whether he was right or wrong. There is a touch of sublimity in this blind and devoted loyalty of Kumbha-karna to the cause of his king and his country.

Bibhishan was driven from the court with indignity, and joined the forces of Rama, to whom he gave much valuable information about Lanka and his warriors.

The passages translated in this Book form Sections vi., viii., ix., portions of Sections xii. and xv. and the whole of Section xvi., of Book vi. of the original text.

I

Ravan Seeks Advice

Monarch of the mighty Rakshas, Ravan spake to warriors all,
Spake to gallant chiefs and princes gathered in his Council Hall :

"Listen, Princes Chiefs and Warriors ! Hanuman our land hath seen
Stealing through the woods of Lanka unto Rama's prisoned queen,

And audacious in his purpose and resistless in his ire,
Burnt our turret tower and temple, wasted Lanka's town with fire !

Speak your council, gallant leaders, Ravan is intent to hear,
Triumph waits on fearless wisdom, speak your thoughts without a fear,

Wisest monarchs acts on counsel from his men for wisdom known,
Next are they who in their wisdom and their daring act alone,

Last, unwisest are the monarchs who nor death nor danger weigh,
Think not, ask not friendly counsel, by their passions borne away !

Wisest counsel comes from courtiers who in holy lore unite,
Next, when varying plans and reasons blending lead unto the right,

Last and worst, when stormy passions mark the helpless king's debate,
And his friends are disunited when his foe is at the gate !

Therefore freely speak your counsel and your monarch's task shall be
But to shape in deed and action what your wisest thoughts decree,

Speak with minds and hearts united, shape your willing monarch's deed,
Counsel peace, or Ravan's forces to a war of vengeance lead,

Ere Sugriva's countless forces cross the vast and boundless main,
Ere the wrathful Rama girdles Lanka with a living chain !"

II

Prahasta's Speech

Dark and high as summer tempest mighty-armed Prahasta rose,
Spake in fierce and fiery accents hurling challenge on his foes :

" Wherefore, Ravan, quails thy bosom, gods against thee strive in vain,
Wherefore fear the feeble mortals, homeless hermits, helpless men ?

Hanuman approached in secret, stealing like a craven spy,
Not from me in open combat would alive the Vanar fly,

Let him come with all his forces, to the confines of the sea
I will chase the scattered army and thy town from foemen free !

Not in fear and hesitation Ravan should repent his deed,
While his gallant Raksha forces stand beside him in his need,

Not in tears and vain repentance Sita to his consort yield,
While his chieftains guard his empire in the battle's gory field ! "

III

Durmukha's Speech

Durmukha of cruel visage and of fierce and angry word,
Rose within the Council Chamber, spake to Lanka's mighty lord :

" Never shall the wily foeman boast of insult on us flung,
Hanuman shall die a victim for the outrage and the wrong !

Stealing in unguarded Lanka through thy city's virgin gate,
He hath courted deep disaster and a dark untimely fate,

Stealing in the inner mansions where our dames and damsels dwell,
Hanuman shall die a victim,—tale of shame he shall not tell !

Need is none of Ravan's army, bid me seek the foe alone,
If he hides in sky or ocean or in nether regions thrown,

Need is none of gathered forces, Ravan's mandate I obey,
I will smite the bold intruder and his Vanar forces slay!"

IV

Vajra-danshtra's Speech

Iron toothéd Vajra-danshtra then arose in wrath and pride,
And his blood-stained mace of battle held in fury by his side,

"Wherefore, Ravan, waste thy forces on the foemen poor and vile,
Hermit Rama and his brother, Hanuman of impious wile,

Bid me,—with this mace of battle proud Sugriva I will slay,
Chase the helpless hermit brothers to the forests far away!

Or to deeper counsel listen! Varied shapes the Rakshas wear.
Let them, wearing human visage, dressed as Bharat's troops appear,

Succour from his ruling brother Rama will in gladness greet,
Then with mace and blood-stained sabre we shall lay them at our feet;

Rock and javelin and arrow we shall on our foemen hail,
Till no poor surviving Vanar lives to tell the tragic tale!"

V

Speech of Nikumbha and Vajra-hanu

Then arose the brave Nikumbha,—Kumbha-karna's son was he,—
Spake his young heart's mighty passion in his accents bold and free:

"Need is none, O mighty monarch, for a battle or a war,
Bid me meet the homeless Rama and his brother wand'ring far,

Did me face the proud Sugriva, Hanuman of deepest wile,
I will rid thee of thy foemen and of Vanars poor and vile ! ”

Rose the chief with jaw of iron, Vajra-hanu fierce and young,
Licked his lips like hungry tiger with his red and lolling tongue :

“ Wherefore, monarch, dream of battle ? Rakshas feed on human gore,
Let me feast upon thy foemen by the ocean’s lonely shore,

Rama and his hermit brother, Hanuman who hides in wood,
Angad and the proud Sugriva soon shall be my welcome food ! ”

VI

Bibhishan’s Warning

Twenty warriors armed and girded in the Council Hall arose,
Thirsting for a war of vengeance, hurling challenge on the foes,

But Bibhishan deep in wisdom,—Raven’s youngest brother he,—
Spoke the word of solemn warning for his eye could farthest see :

“ Pardon, king and honoured elder, if Bibhishan lifts his voice
Against the wishes of the warriors and the monarch’s fatal choice,

Firm in faith and strong in forces Rama comes with conqu’ring might,
Vain against a righteous warrior would unrighteous Ravan fight !

Think him not a common Vanar who transpassed the ocean wave,
Wrecked thy city tower and temple and a sign and warning gave,

Think him not a common hermit who Ayodhya ruled of yore,
Crossing India’s streams and mountains, thunders now on Lanka’s shore !

What dark deed of crime or folly hath the righteous Rama done,
That you stole his faithful consort unprotected and alone,

What offence or nameless insult hath the saintly Sita given,
She who chained in Lanka's prison pleads in piteous tears to Heaven?

Take my counsel, king and elder, Sita to her lord restore,
Wipe this deed of wrong and outrage, Rama's righteous grace implore,

Take my counsel, Raksha monarch, vain against him is thy might,
Doubly armed is the hero,—he who battles for the right!

Render Sita to her Rama ere with vengeance swift and dire,
He despoils our peopled Lanka with his bow and brand and fire,

Render wife unto her husband ere in battle's dread array,
Rama swoops upon thy empire like a falcon on its prey,

Render to the lord his consort ere with blood of Rakshas slain,
Rama soaks the land of Lanka to the margin of the main!

Listen to my friendly counsel,—though it be I stand alone,—
Faithful friend but fiery foeman is this Dasa-ratha's son,

Listen to my voice of warning,—Rama's shafts are true and keen,
Flaming like the with'ring sunbeams on the summer's parched green,

Listen to my soft entreaty,—righteousness becomes the brave,
Cherish peace and cherish virtue and thy sons and daughters save!

VII

Kumbha-karna's Determination

Ravan's brother Kumbha-karna, from his wonted slumber woke,
Mightiest he of all the Rakshas, thus in solemn accents spoke:

„Truly speaks the wise Bibhishan; ere he stole a hermit's wife,
Ravan should have thought and pondered, courted not a causeless strife,

Ere he did this deed of folly, Ravan should have counsel sought,
Tardy is the vain repentance when the work of shame is wrought !

Word of wisdom timely spoken saves from death and dangers dire,
Vain is grief for crime committed,—offerings to unholy fire,

Vain is hero's worth or valour if by foolish counsel led,
Toil and labour fail and perish save when unto wisdom wed,

And the foeman speeds in triumph o'er a heedless monarch's might,
As through gaps of Krauncha mountains *hansas* speed their southern flight !

Ravan, thou hast sought unwisely Sita in her calm retreat,
As the wild and heedless hunter feeds upon the poisoned meat,

Nathless, faithful Kumbha-karna will his loyal duty know,
He shall fight his monarch's battle, he shall face his brother's foe !

True to brother and to monarch, be he right or be he wrong,
Kumbha-karna fights for Lanka 'gainst her foemen fierce and strong,

Recks not if the mighty INDRA and VIVASVAT cross his path,
Or the wild and stormy MARUTS, AGNI in his fiery wrath !

For the Lord of Sky shall tremble when he sees my stature high,
And he hears his thunders echoed by my loud and answering cry,

Rama armed with ample quiver shall no second arrow send,
Ere I slay him in the battle and his limb from limb I rend !

Wiser heads than Kumbha-karna right and true from wrong may know,
Faithful to his race and monarch he shall face the haughty foe,

Joy thee in thy pleasures, Ravan, rule thy realm in regal pride,
When I slay the hermit Rama, widowed Sita be thy bride !”

VIII

Indrajit's Assurance

Indrajit the son of Ravan then his lofty purpose told,
Midst the best and boldest Rakshas none so gallant, none so bold :

“Wherefore, noble king and father, pale Bibhishan’s counsel hear,
Sejor of the race of Rakshas speaks not thus in dastard fear,

! In this race of valiant Rakshas, known for deeds of glory done,
Feeble-hearted, faint in courage, save Bibhishan, there is none !

Matched with meanest of the Rakshas what are sons of mortal men,
What are homeless human brothers hiding in the hermit’s den,

Shall we yield to weary wand’rers, driven from their distant home,
Chased from throne and father’s kingdom in the desert woods to roam ?

Lord of sky and nether regions, INDRA ’neath my weapon fell,
Pale Immortals know my valour and my warlike deeds can tell,

INDRA’s tusker, huge Airavat, by my prowess overthrown,
’Trumpeted its anguished accents, shaking sky and earth with groan,

Mighty Gods and dauntless Daityas fame of Indrajit may know,
And he yields not, king and father, to a homeless human foe !”

IX

Ravan's Decision

Anger swelled in Ravan’s bosom as he cast his blood-red eye
On Bibhishan calm and fearless, and he spake in accents high :

“Rather dwell with open foemen or in homes where cobras haunt,
Than with faithless friends who falter and whom fears of danger daunt !

O, the love of near relations!—false and faithless, full of guile,—
How they sorrow at my glory, at my danger how they smile,

How they grieve with secret anguish when my loftier virtues shine,
How they harbour jealous envy when deserts and fame and mine,

How they scan with curious vision every fault that clouds my path,
How they wait with eager longing till I fall in Fortune's wrath!

Ask the elephants of jungle how their captors catch and bind,—
Not by fire and feeble weapons, but by treason of their kind,

Not by javelin or arrow,—little for these arms they care,—
But their false and fondling females lead them to the hunter's snare!

Long as nourishment and vigour shall impart the milk of cow,
Long as women shall be changeful, hermits holy in their vow,

Aye, so long shall near relations hate us in their inner mind,
Mark us with a secret envy though their words be ne'er so kind!

Rain-drops fall upon the lotus but unmingling hang apart,
False relations round us gather but they blend not heart with heart,

Winter clouds are big with thunder but they shed no freshening rain,
False relations smile and greet us but their soothing words are vain,

Bees are tempted by the honey but from flower to flower they range,
False relations share our favour but in secret seek a change!

Living is thy speech, Bilhishan, secret envy lurks within,
Thou wouldst rule thy elder's empire, thou wouldst wed thy elder's queen,

Take thy treason to the foemen,—brother's blood I may not shed,—
Other Raksha craven-hearted by my royal hands had bled!"

X

Bibhishan's Departure

"This to me!" Bibhishan answered, as with fiery comrades four,
Rose in arms the wrathful Raksha and in fury rushed before,

"But I spare thee, royal Ravan, angry words thy lips have passed,
False and lying and unfounded is the censure thou hast cast!

True Bibhishan sought thy safety, strove to save his elder's reign,—
Speed thee now to thy destruction since all counsel is in vain,

Many are thy smiling courtiers who with honeyed speech beguile,—
Few are they with truth and candour speak their purpose void of guile!

*Blind to reason and to wisdom, Ravan, seek thy destined fate,
For thy impious lust of woman, for thy dark unrighteous hate,*

*Blind to danger and destruction, deaf to word of counsel given,
By the flaming shafts of Rama thou shalt die by will of Heaven!*

*Yet, O ! yet, my king and elder, let me plead with latest breath,
'Gainst the death of race and kinsmen, 'gainst my lord and brother's death,*

*Ponder yet, O Raksha monarch, save thy race and save thy own,
Ravan, part we now for ever,—guard thy ancient sea-girl throne!"*

BOOK X

Y U D D H A

(The War in Ceylon)

RAMA crossed over with his army from India to Ceylon. There is a chain of islands across the strait, and the Indian poet supposes them to be the remains of a vast causeway which Rama built to cross over with his army.

The town of Lanka, the capital of Ceylon, was invested, and the war which followed was a succession of sallies by the great leaders and princes of Lanka. But almost every sally was repulsed, every chief was killed, and at last Ravan himself who made the last sally was slain and the war ended.

Among the numberless fights described in the original work, those of Ravan himself, his brother Kumbha-karna, and his son Indrajit, are the most important, and oftenest recited and listened to in India ; and these have been rendered into English in this Book. And the reader will mark a certain method in the poet's estimate of the warriors who took part in these battles.

First and greatest among the warriors was Rama ; he was never beaten by an open foe, never conquered in fair fight. Next to him, and to him only, was Ravan the monarch of Lanka ; he twice defeated Lakshman in battle, and never retreated except before Rama. Next to Rama and to Ravan stood their brothers, Lakshman and Kumbha-karna ; it is difficult to say who was the best of these two, for they fought only once, and it was a drawn battle. Fifth in order of prowess was Indrajit the son of Ravan, but he was the first in his magic art. Concealed in mists by his magic, he twice defeated both Rama and Lakshman ; but in his last battle he had to wage a face to face combat with Lakshman, and was slain. After these five warriors,

pre-eminent for their prowess, various Vanars and Rakshas took their rank.

The war ended with the fall of Ravan and his funerals. The portions translated in this Book form the whole or portions of Sections xlv., xlviii., lix., lxi., lxvii. and lxxiii., an abstract of Sections lxxv. to xci., and portions of Sections xciii., xcvi., ci., cii., ciii., cix., cx., and cxiii. of Book vi, of the original text.

I

Indrajit's First Battle—The Serpent-Noose

Darkly round the leagured city Rama's countless forces lay,
Far as Ravan cast his glances in the dawning light of day,

Wrath and anguish shook his bosom and the gates he opened wide,
And with ranks of charging Rakshas sallied with a Raksha's pride!

All the day the battle lasted, endless were the tale to tell.
What unnumbered Vanars perished and what countless Rakshas fell,

Darkness came, the fiery foemen urged the still unceasing fight,
Struggling with a deathless hatred fiercer in the gloom of night!

Onward came resistless Rakshas, laid Sugriva's forces low,
Crushed the broken ranks of Vanars, drank the red blood of the foe,

Bravely fought the scattered Vanars facing still the tide of war,
Struggling with the charging tusker and the steed and battle car,

Till at last the gallant Lakshman and the godlike Rama came,
And they swept the hosts of Ravan like a sweeping forest flame,

And their shafts like hissing serpents on the falt'ring foemen fell,
Fiercer grew the sable midnight with the dying shriek and yell!

First arose like clouds of summer from each thunder-sounding car,
From the hoofs of charging coursers, from the elephants of war,

Screams of red blood warm and bubbling issued from the countless slain,
Flooded battle's dark arena like the floods of summer rain,

Sound of trumpet and of bugle, drum and horn and echoing shell,
And the neigh of charging coursers and the tusk's dying wail,

And the yell of wounded Rakshas and the Vanars' fierce delight,
Shook the earth and sounding welkin, waked the echoes of the night !

Six bright arrows Rama thundered from his weapon dark and dread,
Iron-toothéd Bajra-danshtra and his fainting comrades fled,

Dumtless still the serried Rakshas, wave on wave succeeding came,
Perished under Rama's arrows as the moths upon the flame !

Indrajit the son of Ravan, Lanka's glory and her pride,
Matchless in his magic weapons came and turned battle's tide,

What though Angad in his fury had his steeds and driver slayed,
Indrajit hid in the midnight battled from its friendly shade,

Shrouded in a cloud of darkness still he poured his darts like rain,
On young Lakshman and on Rama and on countless Vanars slain,

Matchless in his magic weapons, then he hurled his *Naga*-dart,
Serpent noose upon his foemen draining life blood from their heart !

Vainly then the royal brothers fought the cloud-enshrouded foe,
Vainly sought the unseen warrior dealing unresisted blow,

Fastened by a noose of *Naga* forced by hidden foe to yield,
Rama and the powerless Lakshman ~~fell and fainted~~ on the field !

II

Sita's Lament

Indrajit ere dawned the morning entered in his father's hall,
Spake of midnight's darksome contest, Rama's death and Lakshman's fall,

And the proud and peerless Ravan clasped his brave and gallant son,
Praised him for his skill and valour and his deed of glory done,

And with dark and cruel purpose bade his henchmen yoke his car,
Bade them take the sorrowing Sita to the gory field of war !

Soon they harnessed royal couriers and they took the weeping wife,
Where her Rama, pierced and bleeding, seemed bereft of sense and life,

Brother lay beside his brother with their shattered mail and bow,
Arrows thick and dark with red blood spake the conquest of the foe,

Anguish woke in Sita's bosom and a dimness filled her eye,
And a widow's nameless sorrow burst in widow's mournful cry :

"Rama, lord and king and husband ! didst thou cross the billowy sea,
Didst thou challenge death and danger, court thy fate to rescue me,

Didst thou hurl a fitting vengeance on the cruel Raksha force,
Till the hand of hidden foeman checked thy all-resistless course ?

Breathes upon the earth no warrior who could face thee in the fight,
Who could live to boast his triumph o'er thy world-subduing might,

But the will of Fate is changeless, Death is mighty in his sway,—
Peerless Rama, faithful Lakshman, sleep the sleep that knows no day !

But I weep not for my Rama nor for Lakshman young and brave,
They have done a warrior's duty and have found a warrior's grave,

And I weep not for my sorrows, — sorrow marked me from my birth, —
 Could of Earth I seek in suffering bosom of my mother Earth !

But I grieve for dear Kausalya, sonless mother, widowed queen,
 How she reckons days and seasons in her anguish ever green,

How she waits with eager longing till her Rama's exile o'er,
 He would soothe her lifelong sorrow, bless her aged eyes once more,

Sita's love ! Ayodhya's monarch ! Queen Kausalya's dearest born !
 Rama soul of truth and virtue sleeps the sleep that knows no morn ! ”

Sorely wept the sorrowing Sita in her accents soft and low,
 And the silent stars of midnight wept to witness Sita's woe,

But Trijata her companion, — though a Raksha woman she, —
 Felt her soul subdued by sadness, spake to Sita tenderly :

“ Weep not, sad and saintly Sita, shed not widow's tears in vain,
 For thy lord is sorely wounded, but shall live to fight again, .

Rama and the gallant Lakshman, fainting, not bereft of life,
 They shall live to fight and conquer, — thou shalt be a happy wife.

Mark the Vanars' marshalled forces, listen to their warlike cries,
 'Tis not thus the soldiers gather when a chief and hero dies,

'Tis not thus round lifeless leader muster warriors true and brave,
 For when fall the dying helmsman, sinks the vessel in the wage !

Mark the ring of hopeful Vanars, how they watch o'er Rama's face,
 How they guard the younger Lakshman beaming yet with living grace,

Trust me, sad and sorrowing Sita, marks of death these eyes can trace,
 Shade of death's decaying fingers sweeps not o'er thy Rama's face !

Listen more, my gentle Sita, though a captive in our keep,
 For thy woes and for thy anguish see a Raksha woman weep,

Though thy Rama armed in battle is our unreleting foe,
 For a true and stainless warrior see a Raksha filled with woe !

Fainting on the field of battle, blood-ensanguined in their face,
They shall leave to fight and conquer, worthy of their gallant race

Cold not rigid are their features darkness dwells not on their brow,
Weep not thus, my gentle Sita,—hasten we to Lanka now."

And Trijata spake no falsehood, by the winged Garuda's skill,
Rama and the valiant Lakshman lived to fight their foemen still

III

Ravan's First Battle—The Javelin-Stroke

'Gainst the God-assisted Rama, Ravan's efforts all were vain,
Leaguered Lanka vainly struggled in her adamantine chain,

Wrathful Rakshas with their forces vainly issued through the gate,
Chiefs and serried ranks of warriors met the same resistless fate !

Dark-eyed chief Dhumraksha sallied with the fierce tornado's shock,
Hanuman of peerless prowess slayed him with a rolling rock,

Iron-toothed Vajra-danshtra dashed through countless Vanars slain,
But the young and gallant Angad laid him lifeless on the plain,

Akampan unshaken warrior issued out of Lanka's wall,
Hanuman was true and watchful, speedy was the Raksha's fall,

Then the mighty-armed Prahasta strove to break the hostile line,
But the gallant Nila felled him as the woodman fells the pine !

Bravest chiefs and countless soldiers sallied forth to face the fight,
Broke not Rama's iron circle, 'scaped not Rama's wondrous might,

Ravan could no longer tarry for his mightiest chiefs were slain,
Foremost leaders, dearest kinsmen, lying on the gory plain !

Lofty scorn of foes unworthy spared them from my flaming ire,
 In the blood of slaughtered kinsmen claims from me a vengeance dire,"

Leaving thus the wrathful Ravan mounted on his thundering car,
 Flame-resplendent was the chariot drawn by matchless steeds of war!

Beat of drum and voice of *sankha* and the Raksha's battle cry,
 Song and triumph, chanted *mantra*, smote the echoing vault of sky,

And the troops like cloudy masses with their eyes of lightning fire
 Girt their monarch, as his legions girdle RUDRA in his ire!

Roll'd the car with peal of thunder through the city's lofty gate,
 And each fierce and fiery Raksha charged with warrior's deathless hate,

And the vigour of the onset cleft the stunned and scattered foe,
 As a strong bark cleaves the billows riding on the ocean's brow!

Brave Sugriva king of Vanars met the foeman fierce and strong,
 And a rock with mighty effort on the startled Ravan flung,

Vain the toil, disdainful Ravan dashed aside the flying rock,
 Brave Sugriva pierced by arrows fainted neath the furious shock.

Next Susena chief and elder, Nala and Gavaksha bold,
 Hurled them on the path of Ravan speeding in his car of gold,

Vainly heaved the rock and missile, vainly did with trees assail,
 Onward sped the conquering Ravan, pierced the fainting Vanars fell,

Hanuman the son of MARUT next against the Raksha came,
 Fierce and strong as stormy MARUT, warrior of unrivalled fame,

But the Raksha's mighty onset gods nor mortals might sustain,
 Hanuman in red blood weltring rolled upon the gory plain,

Onward rolled the car of Ravan, where the dauntless Nala stood,
 Armed with rock and tree and missile, thirsting for the Raksha's blood,

Vainly fought the valiant Nila, pierced by Ravan's pointed dart,
On the gory field of battle poured the red blood of his heart.

Onward through the scattered forces Ravan's conquering chariot came,
Where in pride and dauntless valour Lakshman stood of warlike fame.

Calm and proud the gallant Lakshman marked the all-resistless foe,
Boldly challenged Lanka's monarch as he held aloft his bow :

"Welcome, mighty Lord of Lanka ! wage with me an equal strife,
Wherefore with thy royal prowess seek the humble Vanars' life ?"

"Hath thy fate," so answered Ravan, "brought thee to thy deadly foe
Welcome, valiant son of Raghu ! Ravan longs to lay thee low !"

Then they closed in dubious battle, Lanka's Lord his weapon bent,
Seven bright arrows, keen and whistling, on the gallant Lakshman sent.

Vain the toil, for watchful Lakshman stout of heart and true of aim,
With his darts like shooting sunbeams cleft each arrow as it came.

Bleeding from the darts of Lakshman, pale with anger, wounded sore,
Ravan drew at last his *Sakti*, gift of Gods in days of yore,

Javeline of flaming splendour, deadly like the shaft of Fate,
Ravan hurled on dauntless Lakshman in his fierce and furious hate.

Vain were Lakshman's human weapons aimed with skill directed well,
Pierced by *Sakti*, gallant Lakshman in his red blood fainting fell,

Wrathful Rama saw the combat and arose in godlike might,
Bleeding Ravan turned to Lanka, sought his safety in his flight.

IV

Fall of Kumbha-karna

Once more healed and strong and valiant, Lakshman in his arms arose,
Safe behind the gates of Lanka humbled Ravan shunned his foes,

Till the stalwart Kumbha-karna from his wonted slumbers woke,
Mightiest he of all the Rakshas ;—Ravan thus unto him spoke :

“Thou alone, O Kumbha-karna, can the Raksha’s honour save,
Strongest of the Raksha warriors, stoutest-hearted midst the brave,

Speed thee like the Dread Destroyer to the dark and dubious fray,
Cleave through Rama’s girdling forces, chase the scattered foe away !”

Like a mountain’s beetling turret Kumbha-karna stout and tall,
Passed the city’s lofty portals and the city’s girdling wall,

And he raised his voice in battle, sent his cry from shore to shore,
Solid mountains shook and trembled and the sea returned the roar !

INDRA nor the great VARUNA equalled Kumbha-karna’s might,
Vanars trembled at the warrior, sought their safety in their flight,

But the prince of fair Kishkindha, Angad chief of warlike fame,
Marked his panic-stricken forces with a princely warrior’s shame.

“Whither fly, ye trembling Vanars ?” thus the angry chieftain cried,
“All forgetful of your duty, of your worth and warlike pride,

Deem not stalwart Kumbha-karna is our match in open fight,
Forward let us meet in battle, let us crush his giant might !”

Rallied thus, the broken army stone and tree and massive rock,
Hurled upon the giant Raksha speeding with the lightning’s shock,

Vain each flying rock and missile, vain each stout and sturdy stroke
On the Raksha's limbs of iron stone and tree in splinters broke.

Dashing through the scattered forces Kumbha-karna fearless stood,
As a forest conflagration feasts upon the parched wood,

Far as confines of the ocean, to the causeway they had made,
To the woods or caves or billows, Vanars in their terror fled !

Hanuman of dauntless valour turned not in his fear nor fled,
Heaved a rock with mighty effort on the Raksha's towering head,

With his spear-head Kumbha-karna dashed the flying rock aside,
By the Raksha's weapon stricken Hanuman fell in his pride.

Next Rishabha and brave Nila and the bold Sarabha came,
Gavaksha and Gandha-madan, chieftains of a deathless fame,

But the spear of Kumbha-karna hurled to earth his feeble foes,
Dreadful was the field of carnage, loud the cry of battle rose !

Angad prince of fair Kishkindha, filled with anger and with shame,
Tore a rock with wrathful prowess, to the fatal combat came,

Short the combat, soon the Raksha caught and turned his foe around,
Hurled him in his deathful fury, bleeding, senseless on the ground !

Last, Sugriva king of Vanars with a vengeful anger woke,
Tore a rock from bed of mountain and in proud defiance spoke,

Vain Sugriva's toil and struggle, Kumbha-karna hurled a rock,
Felt Sugriva crushed and senseless 'neath the missile's mighty shock !

Piercing through the Vanar forces, like a flame through forest wood,
Came the Raksha where in glory Lakshman calm and fearless stood,

Short their contest, — Kumbha-karna sought a greater, mightier foe,
To the young and dauntless Lakshman spake in accents soft and low :

" Dauntless prince and matchless warrior, fair Sumitra's gallant son,
Thou hast proved unvalled prowess and unending glory won,

But I seek a mightier forman, to thy elder let me go,
I would fight the royal Ruma, or to die or slay my foe!"

*"Fier proud!" said gallant Lakshman, "peerless in thy giant might,
Chaqueur of great Immortals, Lakshman owns thy skill in fight,*

*Mightier far than bright Immortals thou shalt meet in fatal war,
Death for thee in guise of Rama harr's yonder, not afar!"*

He it fared with Kumbha-karna when he strove with Rama's might,
Men on earth nor Gods immortal conquered Rama in the fight,

Dadly arrows keen and flaming from the hero's weapon broke,
Kumbha-karna faint and bleeding felt his death at every stroke,

Last, an arrow pierced his armour, from his shoulders smote his head,
Kumbha-karna, lifeless, headless, rolled upon the gory bed,

Horled unto the heaving ocean Kumbha-karna's body fell,
And as shaken by a tempest, mighty was the ocean's swell!

V

Indrajit's Sacrifice and Second Battle

Still around beleaguered Lanka girdled Rama's living chain,
Riksha chieftain after chieftain strove to break the line in vain,

Sons of Ravan,—brave Narak was by valiant Angad slain,
Trisiras and fierce Devantak, Hanuman slew on the plain,

Atkaya, tall of stature, was by gallant Lakshman killed,
Ravan wept for slaughtered princes, brave in war in weapons skilled,

"Sed no tears of sorrow, father!" Indrajit exclaimed in pride,
"While thy eldest son surviveth triumph dwells on Ravan's side,

Ruma and that stripling Lakshman, I had left them in their gore,
Once again I seek their lifeblood,—they shall live to fight no more.

Hear my vow, O Lord of Rakshas ! ere descends yon radiant sun,
Rama's days and gallant Lakshman's on this wide earth shall be done

Witness INDRA and VIVASWAT, VISHNU great and RUDRA dire,
Witness Sun and Moon and Sadhyas, and the living God of Fire !"

Opened wide the gates of Lanka ; in the spacious field of war,
Indrajit arranged his army, foot and horse and battle car,

Then with gifts and sacred *mantras* bent before the God of Fire,
And invoked celestial succour in the battle dread and dire.

With his offerings and his garlands, Indrajit with spices rare,
Worshipped holy VAISWA-NARA on the altar bright and fair,

* Spear and mace were ranged in order, dart and bow and shining blade
Sacred fuel, blood-red garments, fragrant flowers were duly laid,

Head of goat as black as midnight offered then the warrior brave,
And the shooting tongue of red fire omens of a conquest gave,

Curling to the right and smokeless, red and bright as molten gold,
Tongue of flame received the offering of the hero true and bold !

Victory the sign betokens ! Bow and dart and shining blade,
Sanctified by holy *mantras*, by the Fire the warrior laid,

Then with weapons consecrated, hid in mists as once before,
Indrajit on helpless foemen did his fatal arrows pour !

Fled the countless Vanar forces, panic-stricken, crushed and slain,
And the dead and dying warriors strewed the gory battle plain,

Then on Rama, and on Lakshman, from his dark and misty shroud,
Indrajit discharged his arrows bright as sunbeams through a cloud.

Scanning earth and bright sky vainly for his dark and hidden foe,
Rama to his brother Lakshman spake in grief and spake in woe :

" Once again that wily Raksha, slaying all our Vanar train, -
From his dark and shadowy shelter doth on us his arrows rain,

By the grace of great SWAYAMBHU, Indrajit is lost to sight,
Useless is our human weapon 'gainst his gift of magic might,

If SWAYAMBHU wills it, Lakshman, we shall face these fatal darts,
We shall stand with dauntless patience, we shall die with dauntless
hearts !”

Weaponless but calm and valiant, from the foeman's dart and spell
Patiently the princes suffered, fearlessly the heroes fell !

VI

Indrajit's Third Battle and Fall

Healing herbs from distant mountains Hanuman in safety brought,
Rama rose and gallant Lakshman, once again their foemen sought,

And when night its sable mantle o'er the earth and ocean drew,
Forcing through the gates of Lanka to the frightened city flew !

Gallant sons of Kumbha-karna vainly fought to stem the tide,
Hanuman and brave Sugriva slew the brothers in their pride,

Makaraksha, shark-eyed warrior, vainly struggled with the foe,
Rama laid him pierced and lifeless by an arrow from his bow,

Indrajit arose in anger for his gallant kinsmen slayed,
In his arts and deep devices Sita's beauteous image made,

And he placed the form of beauty on his speeding battle car,
With his sword he smote the image in the gory field of war !

Rama heard the fatal message which his faithful Vanars gave,
And the deathlike trance and tremor fell upon the warrior brave,

But Bibhishan deep in wisdom to the anguished Rama came,
With his words of consolation spake of Rama's righteous dame ;

"Trust me, Rama, trust the comrade,—for I know our wily house,—
Indrajit slays not the woman whom his father seeks as spouse,

'Tis for Sita, impious Ravan meets thee on the battle-field,
Stakes his life and throne and empire, but thy Sita will not yield,

Deem not that the king of Rakshas will permit her blood be shed,
Indrajit slays not the woman whom his father seeks to wed !

'Twas an image of thy Sita, Indrajit hath cleft in twain,
While our army wails and sorrows,—he performs his rites again,

'To the holy Nikumbhila, Indrajit in secret hies,
For the rites which yield him prowess, hide him in the cloudy skies.

'Let young Lakshman seek the foeman ere his magic rites be done,—
Once the sacrifice completed, none can combat Ravan's son,—

Let young Lakshman speed through Lanka till his wily foe is found,
Slay the secret sacrificer on the sacrificial ground !"

Unto holy Nikumbhila, Lakshman with Bibhishan went,
Bravest, choicest of the army, Rama with his brother sent,

Magic rites and sacrifices Indrajit had scarce begun,
When surprised by armed foemen rose in anger Ravan's son !

"Art thou he," thus to Bibhishan, Indrajit in anger spake,
"Brother of my royal father, stealing thus my life to take,

Raksha, born of Raksha parents, dost thou glory in this deed,
Traitor to thy king and kinsmen, false to us in direst need ?

Scorn and pity fill my bosom thus to see thee leave thy kin,
Serving as a slave of foemen, stooping to a deed of sin,

For the slave who leaves his kindred, basely seeks the foeman's grace,
Meets destruction from the foeman after he destroys his race !"

"Untaught child of impure passions," thus Bibhishan answer made,
"Of my righteous worth unconscious bitter accents hast thou said,

Know, proud youth, that Truth and Virtue in my heart precedence take,
And we shun the impious kinsman as we shun the pois'nous snake !

*Listen youth ! this earth no longer bears thy father's sin and strife,
Plunder of the righteous neighbour, passion for the neighbour's wife,*

*Earth and skies have doomed thy father for his sin-polluted reign,
Unto Gods his proud defiance and his wrongs to sons of men !*

*Listen more ! this fated Lanka groans beneath her load of crime,
And shall perish in her folly by the ruthless hand of Time,*

*Thou shalt perish and thy father and this proud presumptuous state,
"Lakshman meets thee, impious Raksha, by the stern decree of Fate !"*

"Hast thou too forgot the lesson," Indrajit to Lakshman said,
"Twice in field of war unconscious thee with Rama have I laid,

Lost thou stealing like a serpent brave my yet unconquered might,
Perish, boy, in thy presumption, in this last and fatal fight !"

Spoke the hero : "Like a coward hid beneath a mantling cloud,
Thou hast battled like a caitiff safe behind thy sheltering shroud,

Now I seek an open combat, time is none to prate or speak,
Boastful word is coward's weapon, weapons and thy arrows seek !"

Soon they mixed in dubious combat, fury fired each foeman's heart,
Either warrior felt his rival worthy of his bow and dart,

Lakshman with his hurtling arrows pierced the Raksha's golden mail,
Shattered by the Raksha's weapons Lakshman's useless armour fell,

Red with gore and dim in eyesight still the chiefs in fury fought,
Neither quailed before his foeman, pause not-grace nor mercy sought,

Till with more than human valour Lakshman drew his bow amain,
Slayed the Raksha's steeds and driver, severed too his bow in tawin,

"If the great and godlike Rama is in faith and duty true,
 Gods assist the cause of virtue!"—Lakshman uttered as he drew,

Fatal was the dart unerring,—Gods assist the true and hold,—
 On the field of Nikumbhila, Lakshman's foeman headless rolled!

II

Ravan's Lament

"Quenched the light of Rakshas' valour!" so the message-bearer said,
 "Lakshman with the deep Bibhishan hath thy son in battle slayed,

Fallen is our prince and hero and his day on earth is done,
 In a brighter world, O monarch, lives thy brave thy gallant son!"

Anguish filled the father's bosom and his fleeting senses failed,
 Till to deeper sorrow wakened Lanka's monarch wept and wailed:

"Greatest of my gallant warriors, dearest to thy father's heart,
 Victor over bright Immortals,—art thou slain by Lakshman's dart,

Noble prince whose peerless arrows could the peaks of Mandar stain,
 And could daunt the Dread Destroyer,—art thou by a mortal slain?

But thy valour lends a radiance to elysium's sunny clime,
 And thy bright name adds a lustre to the glorious rolls of time,

In the skies the bright Immortals lisp thy name with terror pale,
 On the earth our maids and matrons mourn thy fall with piercing wail!

Hark! the voice of lamentation waking in the palace halls,
 Like the voice of woe in forests when the forest monarch falls,

Hark! the wailing widowed princes, mother weeping for her son,
 Leaving them in tears and anguish, Indrajit, where art thou gone?

Full of years,—so oft I pondered,—when the monarch Ravan dies,
 Indrajit shall watch his bedside, Indrajit shall close his eyes,

But the course of nature changes, and the father weeps the son,
Youth is fallen, and the aged lives to fight the foe alone !”

Tears of sorrow, slow and silent, fell upon the monarch's breast,
Then a swelling rage and passion woke within his heaving chest,

Like the sun of scorching summer glowed his face in wrathful shame,
From his brow and rolling eyeballs issued sparks of living flame !

“ Perish she !” exclaimed the monarch, “ she-wolf Sita dies to-day,
Indrajit but cleft her image, Ravan will the woman slay !”

Followed by his trembling courtiers, regal robes and garments rent,
Ravan shaking in his passion to *Asoka's* garden went,

Maddened by his wrath and anguish, with his drawn and flaming sword,
Sought the shades where soft-eyed Sita silent sorrowed for her lord.

Woman's blood the royal sabre on that fatal day had stained,
But his true and faithful courtiers Ravan's wrathful hand restrained,

And the watchful Raksha females girdled round the sorrowing dame,
Fung them on the path of Ravan to withstand a deed of shame.

“ Not against a woman, Ravan, mighty warriors raise their hand,
In the battle,” spake the courtiers, “ duty bids thee use thy brand,

Versed in *Vedas* and in learning, court not thus a catiff's fate,
Woman's blood pollutes our valour, closes heaven's eternal gate !

Leave the woman in her sorrow, mount upon thy battle car,
Faithful to our king and leader we will wake the voice of war,

’Tis the fourteenth day auspicious of the dark and waning moon,
Glory waiteth thee in battle and thy vengeance cometh soon,

All-resistless in the contest slay thy foeman in his pride,
Seek as victor of the combat widowed Sita as thy bride !”

Slow and sullen, dark and silent, Ravan then his wrath restrained,
Vengeance on his son's destroyer deep within his bosom reigned !

VIII

Ravan's Second Battle and Vengeance

Voice of woe and lamentation and the cry of woman's wail,
Issuing from the homes of Lanka did the monarch's ears assail,

And a mighty thought of vengeance waked within the monarch's heart,
And he heaved a sigh of anguish as he grasped his bow and dart :

" Arm each chief and gallant Raksha ! be our sacred duty done,
Ravan seeks a fitting vengeance for his brave and noble son,

Mahodar and Virupaksha, Mahaparshwa warrior tall,
Arm ! this fated day will witness Lakshman's or your monarch's fall !

Call to mind each slaughtered hero,— Khara, Dushan, slain in fight,
Kumbha-karna giant warrior, Indrajit of magic night,

Earth nor sky shall hide my foemen nor the ocean's heaving swell,
Scattered ranks of Rama's forces shall my speedy vengeance tell,

Be the red-earth strewn and covered with our countless foemen slain,
Hungry wolves and blood-beaked vultures feed upon the ghastly plain,

For his great and gallant brother, for his brave and beauteous son,
Ravan seeks a fitting vengeance, Rakshas be your duty done !"

House to house, in Lanka's city, Ravan's royal hest was heard,
Street and lane poured forth their warrior's by a mighty passion stirred,

With their javelin and sabre, mace and club and axe and pike,
Sataghni and *bhindipala*, quoit and discus quick to strike.

And they formed the line of tuskers and the line of battle car,
Mule and camel fit for burden and the fiery steed of war,

Serried ranks of armed soldiers shook the earth beneath their tread,
Horsemen that on wings of lightning o'er the field of battle spread.

Drum and conch and sounding trumpet waked the echoes of the sky,
Pataha and loud *mridanga* and the people's maddening cry,

Thundering through the gates of Lanka, Ravan's lofty chariot passed,
Destined by his fortune, Ravan ne'er again those portals crost!

And the sun was dim and clouded and a sudden darkness fell,
Birds gave forth their boding voices and the earth confessed a spell,

Gouts of blood in rain descended, startled coursers turned to fly,
Vultures swooped upon the banner, jackals yelled their doleful cry,

Omens of a dark disaster mantled o'er the vale and rock,
And the ocean heaved in billows, nations felt the earthquake's shock!

Darkly closed the fatal battle, sturdy Vanars fell in fight,
Warlike leaders of the Rakshas perished neath the foeman's might,

Mahodhar and Virupaksha were by bold Sugriva slain,
Crushed by Angad, Mahaparshwa slumbered lifeless on the plain,

But with more than mortal valour Ravan swept the ranks of war,
Warriors fell beneath his prowess, fled before his mighty car,

Cleaving through the Vanar forces, filled with vengeance deep and dire,
Ravan marked the gallant Lakshman flaming like a crimson fire!

Like the tempest cloud of summer Ravan's wingéd coursers flew,
But Bibhishan in his prowess soon the gallant chargers slew,

Dashing from his useless chariot Ravan leaped upon the ground,
And his false and traitor brother by his dearest foeman found!

Wrathful Ravan marked Bibhishan battling by the foeman's side
And he hurled his pond'rous weapon for to slay him in his pride,

Lakshman marked the mighty jav'lin as it winged its whizzing flight,
Cleft it in its onward passage saved Bibhishan by his might!

Grimly smiled the angry Ravan gloating in his vengeful wrath,
Spake to young and dauntless Lakshman daring thus to cross his path:

Welcome, Lakshman ! thee I battle for thy deed of darkness done,
Face the anger of a father, cruel slayer of the son,

By thy skill and by thy valour, false Bibhishan thou hast saved,
Save thyself ! Deep in this bosom is a cruel grief engraved !"

Father's grief and sad remembrance urged the lightning-winged dart,
Ravan's *Sakti* fell resistless on the senseless Lakshman's heart,

Wrathful Rama saw the combat and arose in godlike might,
Carless, steedless, wounded Ravan sought his safety in his flight.

IX

Rama's Lament

" Art thou fallen," sorrowed Rama, " weary of this endless strife,
Lakshman, if thy days are ended, Rama recks not for his life,

Gone is Rama's wonted valour, weapons leave his nerveless hand,
Drop his bow and shining arrows, useless hangs his sheathed brand !

Art thou fallen, gallant Lakshman, death and faintness on me creep,
Weary of this fatal contest let me by my brother sleep,

Weary of the strife and triumph, since my faithful friend is gone,
Rama follows in his footsteps and his task on earth is done !

Thou hast from the far Ayodhya, followed me in deepest wood,
In the thickest of the battle thou hast by thy elder stood,

Love of woman, love of comrade, trite is love of kith and kind,
Love like thine, true-hearted brother, not on earth we often find !

When Sumitra seeks thee, Lakshman, ever weeping for thy sake,
When she asks me of her hero, what reply shall Rama make,

What reply, when Bharat questions,—Where is he who went to wood,
Where is true and faithful Lakshman who beside his elder stood?

What great crime or fatal shadow darkens o'er my hapless life,
Victim to the sins of Rama sinless Lakshman falls in strife,

Best of brothers, best of warriors, wherefore thus unconscious lie,
Mother, wife, and brother wait thee, ope once more thy sleeping eye!"

Tara's father, wise Susena, gentle consolation lent,
Hanuman from distant mountains herbs of healing virtue rent,

And by loving Rama tended, Lakshman in his strength arose,
Stirred by thoughts of fatal vengeance Rama sought the flying foes.

X

Celestial Arms and Chariot

Not in dastard terror Ravan sought his safety in his flight,
But to seek fresh steeds of battle ere he faced his foeman's might,

Harnessing his gallant coursers to a new and glorious car,
Sunlike in its radiant splendour, Ravan came once more to war.

Gods in wonder watched the contest of the more than mortal foes,
Ravan mighty in his vengeance, Rama lofty in his woes,

Gods in wonder marked the heroes, lion-like in jungle wood,
INDRA sent his arms and chariot where the human warrior stood!

"Speed, Matali," thus spake INDRA, "speed thee with my heavenly car,
Where on foot the righteous Rama meets his mounted foe in war,

Speed, for Ravan's days are ended, and his moments brief and few,
Rama strives for right and virtue,—Gods assist the brave and true!"

Brave Matali drove the chariot drawn by steeds like solar ray,
Where the true and righteous Rama sought his foe in fatal fray,

Shining arms and heavenly weapons he to lofty Rama gave,—
When the righteous strive and struggle, Gods assist the true and brave !

“ Take this car,” so said Matali, “ which the helping Gods provide,
Rama, take these steeds celestial, INDRA’s golden chariot ride,

Take this royal bow and quiver, wear this falchion dread and dire,
VISWA-KARMA forged this armour in the flames of heavenly fire,

I shall be thy chariot driver and shall speed the thund’ring car,
Slay the sin-polluted Ravan in this last and fatal war !

Rama mounted on the chariot clad in arms of heavenly sheen,
And he mingled in a contest mortal eyes have never seen !

XI

Ravan’s Third Battle and Fall

Gods and mortals watched the contest and the heroes of the war,
Ravan speeding on his chariot, Rama on the heavenly car,

And a fiercer form the warriors in their fiery frenzy wore,
And a deeper weight of hatred on their anguished bosoms bore,

Clouds of dread and deathful arrows hid the radiant face of sky,
Darker grew the day of combat, fiercer grew the contest high !

Pierced by Ravan’s pointed weapons bleeding Rama owned no pain,
Rama’s arrows keen and piercing sought his foeman’s life in vain,

Long the dubious battle lasted, and with wilder fury fraught,
Wounded, faint, and still unyielding, blind with wrath the rivals fought,

Pike and club and mace and trident scaped from Ravan’s vengeful hand,
Spear and arrows Rama wielded, and his bright and flaming brand !

Long the dubious battle lasted, shook the ocean, hill and dale,
Winds were hushed in voiceless terror and the livid sun was pale,

Still the dubious battle lasted, until Rama in his ire,
Wielded BRAHMA's deathful weapon flaming with celestial fire !

Weapon which the Saint Agastya had unto the hero given,
Winged as lightning dart of INDRA, fatal as the bolt of heaven,

Wrapped in smoke and flaming flashes, speeding from the circled bow,
Pierced the iron heart of Ravan, lain the lifeless hero low,

And a cry of pain and terror from the Raksha ranks arose,
And a shout from joying Vanars as they smote their fleeing foes !

Heavenly flowers in rain descended on the red and gory plain,
And from unseen harps and timbrels rose a soft celestial strain,

And the ocean heaved in gladness, brighter shone the sunlit sky,
Soft and cool the gentle zephyrs through the forest murmured by,

Sweetest scent and fragrant odours wafted from celestial trees,
Fell upon the earth and ocean, rode upon the laden breeze !

*Voice of blessing from the bright sky fell on Raghu's valiant son, —
Champion of the true and righteous ! now thy noble task is done !*

XII

Mandodari's Lament and the Funerals

"Hast thou fallen," wept in anguish Ravan's first and eldest bride,
Mandodari, slender-waisted, Queen of Lanka's state and pride,

"Hast thou fallen, king and consort, more than Gods in warlike might,
Slain by man, whom bright Immortals feared to face in dubious fight ?

Not a man !—the Dark Destroyer came to thee in mortal form,
Or the heaven-traversing VISHNU, INDRA ruler of the storm,

Gods of sky in shape of Vanars helped the dark and cruel deed,
Girdling round the Discus-Wielder in the battle's direst need !

Well I knew,—when Khara, Dushan, were by Rama's prowess slain,
Rama was no earthly mortal, he who crossed the mighty main,

Well I knew,—when with his army he invested Lanka's gate,
Rama was no earthly mortal but the messenger of Fate,

And I prayed,—the faithful Sita might unto her consort go,
For 'tis writ that nations perish for a righteous woman's woe,

But for impious lust of woman,—all forgetful of thy wife,
Thou hast lost thy crown and kingdom, thou hast lost thy fated life!

Woe to me ! the sad remembrance haunts my tortured bosom still,
Of our days on famed Kailasa or on Meru's golden hill,

Gone the days of joy and gladness, Mandodari's days are done,
Since her lord and king and husband from her dear embrace is gone!"

Sorely wept the Queen of Lanka ; Rama, tender, tearful, true,
Bade the funeral rites and honours to a fallen foeman due,

And they heaped the wood of *Chandan* and the fragrant garland laid,
On the pyre they lifted Ravan in the richest robes arrayed,

Weeping queens and sorrowing Rakshas round their fallen leader stood,
Brahmans with their chaunted *mantras* piled the dry and scented wood,

Oil and cords and sacred offerings were upon the altar laid,
And a goat of inky darkness as a sacrifice was slayed.

Piously the good Bibhishan lighted Ravan's funeral pyre,
And the zephyrs gently blowing fanned the bright and blazing fire,

Slow and sad with due ablutions mourners left the funeral site,
Rama then unstrung his weapon, laid aside his arms of might.

BOOK XI

RAJYA-ABHISHEKA

(Rama's Return and Consecration)

THE real Epic ends with the war, and with Rama's happy return to Ayodhya. Sita proves her stainless virtue by an Ordeal of Fire, and returns with her lord and with Lakshman in aerial car, which Ravan had won from the Gods, and which Bibhishan made over to Rama. Indian poets are never tired of descriptions of nature, and the poet of the Ramayana takes advantage of Rama's journey from Ceylon to Oudh to give us a bird's-eye view of the whole continent of India, as well as to recapitulate the principal incidents of his great Epic.

The gathering of men at Ayodhya, the greetings to Rama, and his consecration by the Vedic bard Vasishtha, are among the most pleasing passages in the whole poem. And happiness enjoyed by men during the reign of Rama—described in the last few couplets of this Book—is an article of belief and a living tradition in India to this day.

The portions translated in this Book form the whole or portions of Sections cxviii., cxx., cxxv., cxxix., and cxxx. of Book vi. of the original text.

I

Ordeal by Fire

For she dwelt in Ravan's dwelling,—rumour clouds a woman's fame—
 Righteous Rama's brow was clouded, saintly Sita spake in shame :

“ Wherefore spake ye not, my Rama, if your bosom doubts my faith,
 Dearer than a dark suspicion to a woman were her death !

Wherefore, Rama, with your token came your vassal o'er the wave,
 To assist a fallen woman and a tainted wife to save,

Wherefore with your mighty forces crossed the ocean in your pride,
 Risked your life in endless combats for a sin-polluted bride ?

Hast thou, Rama, all forgotten ?—Saintly Janak saw my birth,
 Child of harvest-bearing furrow, Sita sprang from Mother Earth,

As a maiden true and stainless unto thee I gave my hand,
 As a consort fond and faithful roved with thee from land to land !

But a woman pleadeth vainly when suspicion clouds her name,
 Lakshman, if thou lov'st thy sister, light for me the funeral flame,

When the shadow of dishonour darkens o'er a woman's life,
 Death alone is friend and refuge of a true and trustful wife,

When a righteous lord and husband turns his cold averted eyes,
 Funeral flame dispels suspicion, honour lives when woman dies ! ”

Dark was Rama's gloomy visage and his lips were firmly sealed,
 And his eye betrayed no weakness, word disclosed no thought concealed,

Silent heaved his heart in anguish, silent drooped his tortured head,
 Lakshman with a throbbing bosom funeral pyre for Sita made,

And Videha's sinless daughter prayed unto the Gods above,
 On her lord and wedded consort cast her dying looks of love !

*"If in act and thought," she uttered, "I am true unto my name,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this Fire protect my fame!*

*If a false and lying scandal brings a faithful woman shame,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this Fire protect my fame!*

*If in life-long loving duty I am free from sin and blame,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this Fire protect my fame!"*

Fearless in her faith and valour Sita stepped upon the pyre,
And her form of beauty vanished circled by the claspings fire,

And an anguish shook the people like the ocean tempest-tost,
Old and young and maid and matron wept for Sita true and lost,

For bedecked in golden splendour and in gems and rich attire,
Sita vanished in the red fire of the newly lighted pyre!

*Rishis and the great Gandharvas, Gods who know each secret deed,
Witnessed Sita's high devotion and a woman's lofty creed,*

And the earth by ocean girdled with its wealth of teeming life,
Witnessed deed of dauntless duty of a true and stainless wife!

II

Woman's Truth Vindicated

Slow the red flames rolled asunder, God of Fire incarnate came,
Holding in his radiant bosom fair Videha's sinless dame,

Not a curl upon her tresses, not a blossom on her brow,
Not a fibre of her mantle did with tarnished lustre glow!

Witness of our sins and virtues, God of Fire incarnate spake,
Bade the sorrow-stricken Rama back his sinless wife to take:

*"Ravan in his impious folly forced from thee thy faithful dame,
Guarded by her changeless virtue, Sita still remains the same,*

Tempted oft by female Rakshas in the dark and dismal wood,
In her woe and in her sadness true to thee hath Sita stood,

Courted oft by royal Ravan in the forest far and lone,
True to wedded troth and virtue Sita thought of thee alone,

Pure is she in thought and action, pure and stainless, true and meek,
I, the witness of all actions, thus my sacred mandate speak !”

Rama's forehead was unclouded and a radiance lit his eye,
And his bosom heaved in gladness as he spake in accents high :

“Never from the time I saw her in her maiden days of youth,
Have I doubted Sita's virtue, Sita's fixed and changeless truth,

I have known her ever sinless,—let the world her virtue know,
For the God of Fire is witness to her truth and changeless vow!

Ravan in his pride and passion conquered not a woman's love,
For the virtuous like the bright fire in their native radiance move,

Ravan in his rage and folly conquered not a faithful wife
For like ray of sun unsullied is a righteous woman's life,

Be the wide world now a witness,—pure and stainless is my dame,
Rama shall not leave his consort till he leaves his righteous fame !”

In his tears the contrite Rama clasped her in a soft embrace,
And the fond forgiving Sita in his bosom hid her face !

III

Return Home by the Aerial Car

"Mark my love," so Rama uttered, as on flying Pushpa car,
Borne by swans, the home-returning exiles left the field of war,

"Lanka's proud and castled city on Trikuta's triple crest,
As on peaks of bold Kailasa mansions of Immortals rest !

Mark the gory fields surrounding where the Vanars in their might,
Faced and fought the charging Rakshas in the long and deathful fight,

Indrajit and Kumbha-karna, Ravan and his chieftains slain,
Fell upon the field of battle and their red blood soaks the plain.

Mark where dark-eyed Mandodari, Ravan's slender-waisted wife,
Wept her widow's tears of anguish when her monarch lost his life,

She hath dried her tears of sorrow and bestowed her heart and hand,
On Bibhishan good and faithful, crownéd king of Lanka's land.

See my love, round Ceylon's island how the ocean billows roar,
Hiding pearls in caves of corals, strewing shells upon the shore,

And the causeway far-extending, — monument of Rama's fame, —
'Rama's Bridge' to distant ages shall our deathless deeds proclaim !

See the rockbound fair Kishkindha and her mountain-girdled town,
Where I slayed the warrior Bali, placed Sugriva on the throne,

And the hill of Rishyamuka where Sugriva first I met,
Gave him word,—he would be monarch ere the evening's sun had set.

See the sacred lake of Pampa by whose wild and echoing shore,
Rama poured his lamentations when he saw his wife no more,

And the woods of Janasthana where Jatayu fought and bled,
When the deep deceitful Ravan with my trusting Sita fled.

Dost thou mark, my soft-eyed Sita, cottage on the river's shore,
Where in righteous peace and penance Sita lived in days of yore,

And by gloomy Godavari, Saint Agastya's home of love,
Holy men by holy duties sanctify the sacred grove !

Dost thou, o'er the Dandak forest, view the Chitrakuta hill,
Deathless bard the Saint Valmiki haunts its shade and crystal rill,

Thither came the righteous Bharat and my loving mother came,
Longing in their hearts to take us to Ayodhya's town of fame.

Dost thou, dear devoted Sita, see the Jumna in her might,
Where in Bharad-waja's *asram* passed we, love, a happy night,

And the broad and ruddy Ganga sweeping in her regal pride,
Forest-dweller faithful Guha crossed us to the southern side.

Joy ! joy ! my gentle Sita ! Fair Ayodhya looms above,
Ancient seat of Raghu's empire, nest of Rama's hope and love,

Bow, bow, to bright Ayodhya ! Darksome did the exiles roam,
Now their weary toil is ended in their father's ancient home !"

IV

Greetings

Message from returning Rama, Vanars to Ayodhya brought,
Righteous Bharat gave his mandate with a holy joy distraught :

" Let our city shrines and *chaityas* with a lofty music shake,
And our priests to bright Immortals grateful gifts and offerings make,

Bards, reciters of *Puranas*, minstrels versed in ancient song,
Women with their tuneful voices lays of sacred love prolong,

Let our queens and stately courtiers step in splendour and in state,
Chieftains with their marshalled forces range along the city gate,

And our white-robed holy Brahmans hymns and sacred *mantras* sing,
Offer greetings to our brother, render homage to our king !”

Brave Satrugna heard his elder and his mandate duly kept :
“ Be our great and sacred city levelled, cleansed, and duly swept,

And the grateful earth be sprinkled with the water from the well,
Strewn with parchéd rice and offering and with flower of sweetest smell,

On each turret tower and temple let our flags and colours wave,
On the gates of proud Ayodhya plant Ayodhya’s banners brave,

Gay festoons of flowering creeper home and street and dwelling line,
And in gold and glittering garment let the gladdened city shine !”

Elephants in golden trappings thousand chiefs and nobles bore,
Chariots cars and gallant chargers speeding by Sarayu’s shore,

And the serried troops of battle marched with colours rich and brave,
Proudly o’er the gay procession did Ayodhya’s banners wave.

In their stately gilded litters royal dames and damsels came,
Queen Kausalya first and foremost, Queen Sumitra rich in fame,

Pious priest and learned Brahman, chief of guild from near and far,
Noble chief and stately courtier with the wreath and water jar.

Girt by minstrel hard and herald chanting glorious deeds of yore,
Bharat came,—his elder’s sandals still the faithful younger bore,—

Silver-white his proud umbrella, silver-white his garland brave,
Silver-white the fan of *chowri* which his faithful henchmen wave.

Stately march of gallant chargers and the roll of battle car,
Heavy tread of royal tuskers and the beat of drum of war,

Dundubhi and echoing *tankha*, voice of nations gathered nigh,
Shook the city’s tower and temple and the pealing vault of sky !

Sailing o’er the cloudless ether Rama’s Pushpa chariot came;
And ten-thousand jocund voices shouted Rama’s joyous name,

Women with their loving greetings, children with their joyous cry,
Tottering age and lisping infant hailed the righteous chief and high.

Bharat lifted up his glances unto Rama from afar,
Unto Sita, unto Lakshman, seated on the Pushpa car,

And he wafted high his greetings and he poured his pious lay,
As one wafts the chaunted *mantra* to the rising God of Day!

Silver swans by Rama's bidding soft descended from the air,
And on earth the chariot lighted,—car of flower divinely fair,—

Bharat mounting on the chariot, sought his long-lost elder's grace,
Rama held his faithful younger in a brother's dear embrace.

With his greetings unto Lakshman, unto Rama's faithful dame,
To Bibhishan and Sugriva and each chief who thither came,

Bharat took the jewelled sandals with the rarest gems inlaid,
Placed them at the feet of Rama and in humble accents said :

"Tokens of thy rule and empire, *these* have filled thy royal throne,
Faithful to his trust and duty Bharat renders back thine own,

Bharat's life is joy and gladness, for returned from distant shore,
Thou shalt rule thy spacious kingdom and thy loyal men once more,

'Thou shalt hold thy rightful empire and assume thy royal crown,
Faithful to his trust and duty,—Bharat renders back thine own !"

V

The Consecration

Joy! joy! in bright Ayodhya gladness filled the hearts of all,
Joy! joy! a lofty music sounded in the royal hall,

Fourteen years of woe were ended, Rama now assumed his own,
And they placed the weary wand'rer on his father's ancient throne,

And they brought the sacred water from each distant stream and hill,
From the vast and boundless ocean, from each far and sacred rill.

Vasishtha the Bard of *Vedas* with auspicious rites and meet
Placed the monarch and the consort on the gemmed and jewelled seat,

Gautama and Katyayana, Vamadeva priest of yore,
Jabali and wise Vijaya versed in holy ancient lore,

Poured the fresh and fragrant water on the consecrated king,
As the Gods anointed INDRA from the pure ethereal spring !

Vedic priests with sacred *mantra*, dark-eyed virgins with their song,
Warriors girt in arms and weapons round the crowned monarch throng,

Juices from each fragrant creeper on his royal brow they place,
And his father's crown and jewels Rama's ample forehead grace,

And as Manu, first of monarchs, was enthroned in days of yore,
So was Rama consecrated by the priests of Vedic lore !

Brave Satrugna on his brother cast the white umbrella's shade,
Bold Sugriva and Bibhishan waved the *chowri* gem-inlaid,

VAYU, God of gentle zephyrs, gift of golden garland lent,
INDRA, God of rain and sunshine, wreath of pearls to Rama sent,

Gay *Gandharvas* raised the music, fair *Apsaras* formed the ring,
Men in nations hailed their Rama as their lord and righteous king !

*And 'tis told by ancient sages, during Rama's happy reign,
Death untimely, dire diseases, came not to his subject men,*

*Widows wept not in their sorrow for their lords untimely lost,
Mothers wailed not in their anguish for their babes by YAMA crost,*

*Robbers, cheats, and gay deceivers tempted not with lying word,
Neighbour loved his righteous neighbour and the people loved their lord !*

*Trees their ample produce yielded as returning seasons went,
And the earth in grateful gladness never failing harvest lent,*

*Rains descended in their season, never came the blighting gale,
Rich in crop and rich in pasture was each soft and smiling vale,*

*Loom and anvil gave their produce and the tilled and fertile soil,
And the nation lived rejoicing in their old ancestral toil!*

BOOK XII

A S W A - M E D H A

(Sacrifice of the Horse)

THE real Epic ends with Rama's happy return to Ayodhya. An *Uttara-Kanda* or Supplement is added, describing the fate of Sita, and giving the poem a sad ending.

The dark cloud of suspicion still hung on the fame of Sita, and the people of Ayodhya made reflections on the conduct of their king, who had taken back into his house a woman who had lived in the palace of Ravan. Rama gave way to the opinion of his people, and he sent away his loving and faithful Sita to live in forests once more.

Sita found an asylum in the hermitage of Valmiki, the reputed author of this Epic, and there gave birth to twins, Lava and Kusa. Years passed on, and Lava and Kusa grew up as hermit boys, and as pupils of Valmiki.

After years had passed, Rama performed a great Horse-sacrifice. Kings and princes were invited from neighbouring countries, and a great feast was held. Valmiki came to the sacrifice, and his pupils, Lava and Kusa, chanted there the great Epic, the *Ramayana*, describing the deeds of Rama. In this interesting portion of the poem we find how songs and poetry were handed down in ancient India by memory. The boys had learnt the whole of the Epic by heart, and chanted portions of it, day after day, till the recital was completed. We are told that the poem consists of seven books, 500 cantos, and 24,000 couplets. Twenty cantos were recited each day, so that the recital of the whole poem must have taken twenty-five days. It was by such feats of memory and by such recitals that literature was preserved in ancient times in India.

Rama recognised his sons in the boy-minstrels, and his heart yearned once more for Sita whom he had banished, but never forgotten. He asked the Poet Valmiki to restore his wife to him, and he desired that Sita might once more prove her purity in the great assembly, so that he might take her back with the approval of his people.

Sita came. But her life had been darkened by an unjust suspicion, her heart was broken, and she invoked the Earth to take her back. And the Earth, which had given Sita birth, yawned and took back her suffering child into her bosom.

In the ancient hymns of *Rig Veda*, Sita is simply the goddess of the field-furrow which bears crops for men. We find how that simple conception is concealed in the *Ramayana*, where Sita the heroine of the Epic is still born of the field-furrow, and after all her adventures returns to the earth. To the millions of men and women in India, however, Sita is not an allegory; she leaves in their hearts and affections as the model of womanly love, womanly devotion, and a wife's noble self-abnegation.

The portions translated in this Book form the whole or portions of Sections xcii., xciii., xciv., and xcvi. of Book vii. of the original text.

1

The Sacrifice

Years have passed; the lonely Rama in his joyless palace reigned,
And for righteous duty yearning, *Aswa-medha* rite ordained,

And a steed of darkest sable with the valiant Lakshman sent,
And with troops and faithful courtiers to Naimisha's forest went.

Fair was far Naimisha's forest by the limpid Gumti's shore,
Monarchs came and warlike chieftains, Brahmans versed in sacred lore,

Bharat with each friend and kinsman served them with the choicest food,
Proud retainers by each chieftain and each crownéd monarch stood.

Palaces and stately mansions were for royal guests assigned,
Peaceful homes for learnéd Brahman were with trees umbrageous lined,

Gifts were made unto the needy, cloth by skilful weavers wrought,
Ere the suppliants spake their wishes, ere they shaped their inmost thought!

Rice unto the helpless widow, to the orphan wealth and gold,
Gifts they gave to holy Brahman, shelter to the weak and old,

Garments to the grateful people crowding by their monarch's door,
Food and drink unto the hungry, home unto the orphan poor.

Ancient *rishis* had not witnessed feast like this in any land,
Bright Immortals in their bounty blest not with a kinder hand,

Through the year and circling seasons lasted Rama's sacred feast,
And the untold wealth of Rama by his kindly gifts increased!

II

Valmiki and His Pupils

Foremost midst the gathered Sages to the holy *yajna* came
Deathless Bard of Lay Immortal—Saint Valmiki rich in fame,

Midst the humble homes of *rishis*, on the confines of the wood,
Cottage of the Saint Valmiki in the shady garden stood.

Fruits and berries from the jungle, water from the crystal spring,
With a careful hand Valmiki did unto his cottage bring,

And he spake to gentle Lava, Kusa child of righteous fame,—
Sita's sons, as youthful hermits to the sacred feast thy came:

"Lift your voices, righteous pupils, and your richest music lend,
Sing the Lay of *Ramayana* from the first unto the end,

Sing it to the holy Brahman, to the warrior fair and tall,
In the crowded street and pathway, in the monarch's palace hall,

Sing it by the door of Rama,—he ordains this mighty feast,
Sing it to the royal ladies,—they shall to the story list,

Sing from day to day unwearied, in this sacrificial site,
Chant to all the gathered nations Rama's deeds of matchless might,

And this store of fruits and berries will allay your thirst and toil,
Gentle children of the forest unknown strangers in this soil !

Twenty cantos of the Epic, morn to night, recite each day,
Till from end to end is chanted *Ramayana's* deathless Lay,

Ask no alms, receive no riches, nor of your misfortunes tell,
Useless unto us is bounty who in darksome forests dwell,

Children of the wood and mountain, cruel fortune clouds your birth,
Stainless virtue be your shelter, virtue be your wealth on earth !

If the royal Rama questions and your lineage seeks to know,
Say,—Valmiki is our Teacher and our Sire on earth below,

Wake your harps to notes of rapture and your softest accents lend,
With the music of the poet music of your voices blend,

Bow unto the mighty monarch, bow to Rama fair and tall,
He is father of his subjects, he is lord of creatures all !"

III

Recital of the Ramayana

When the silent night was ended, and their pure ablutions done,
Joyous went the minstrel brothers, and their lofty lay begun,

Rama to the hermit minstrels lent a monarch's willing ear,
Blended with the simple music dulcet was the lay to hear,

And so sweet the chanted accents, Rama's inmost soul was stirred,
With his royal guests and courtiers still the deathless lay he heard !

Heralds versed in old *Puranas*, Brahmans skilled in pious rite,
Minstrels deep in lore of music poets fired by heavenly might,

Watchers of the constellations, min'sters of the festive day,
Men of science and of logic, bards who sang the ancient lay,

Painters skilled and merry dancers who the festive joy prolong,
Hushed and silent in their wonder listed to the wondrous song !

And as poured the flood of music through the bright and live-long day,
Eyes and ears and hearts insatiate drank the nectar of the lay,

And the eager people whispered : " See the boys, how like our king,
As two drops of limpid water from the parent bubble spring !

Were the boys no hermit-children, in the hermit's garments clad,
We would deem them Rama's image,— Rama as a youthful lad ! "

Twenty cantos of the Epic thus the youthful minstrels sung,
And the voice of stringéd music through the Epic rolled along,

Out spake Rama in his wonder : " Scarce I know who these may be,
Eighteen thousand golden pieces be the children-minstrels' fee ! "

"Not so," answered thus the children, "we in darksome forests dwell,
Gold and silver, bounteous monarch, forest life beseein not well!"

"Noble children!" uttered Rama, "dear to me the words you say,
Tell me who composed this Epic,—Father of this deathless Lay?"

*"Saint Valmiki," spake the minstrels "framed the great immortal song,
Four and twenty thousand verses to this noble Lay belong,*

*Untold toles of deathless virtue sanctify his sacred line,
And five hundred glorious cantos in this glorious Epic shine,*

*In six Books of mighty splendour was the poet's task begun,
With a seventh Book supplemental, is the poet's labour done,*

*All thy matchless deeds, O monarch, in this Lay will brighter shine,
List to us from first to ending if thy royal heart incline!"*

"Be it so," thus Rama answered, but the hours of day were o'er,
And Valmiki's youthful pupils to their cottage came once more.

Rama with his guests and courtiers slowly left the royal hall,
Eager was his heart to listen, eager were the monarchs all,

And the voice of song and music thus was lifted day to day,
And from day to day they listened to Valmiki's deathless Lay!

IV

Lava and Kusa Recognised

Flashed upon the contrite Rama glimpses of the dawning truth,
And with tears of love paternal Rama clasped each minstrel youth,

Yearned his sorrow-stricken bosom for his pure and peerless dame,
Sita banished to the forest, stainless in her righteous fame!

In his tears repentant Rama to Valmiki message sent,
That his heart with eager longing sought her from her banishment :

" Pure in soul ! before these monarchs may she yet her virtue prove,
Grace once more my throne and kingdom, share my unforgotten love,

Pure in soul ! before my subjects may her truth and virtue shine !
Queen of Rama's heart and empire may she once again be mine !"

V

Sita Lost

Morning dawned ; and with Valmiki, Sita to the gathering came,
Banished wife and weeping mother, sorrow stricken, suffering dame,

Pure in thought and deed, Valmiki, gave his troth and plighted word,—
Faithful still the banished Sita in her bosom held her lord !

" Mighty Saint," so Rama answered as he bowed his humbled head,
" Listening world will hear thy mandate and the word that thou hast said,

Never in his bosom Rama questioned Sita's faithful love,
And the God of Fire incarnate did her stainless virtue prove !

Pardon, if the voice of rumour drove me to a deed of shame,
Bowling to my people's wishes I disowned my sinless dame,

Pardon, if to please my subjects I have bade my Sita roam,
Tore her from my throne and empire, tore her from my heart and home !

In the dark and dreary forest was my Sita left to mourn,
In the lone and gloomy jungle were my royal children born,

Help me, Gods, to wipe this error and this deed of sinful pride,
May my Sita prove her virtue, be again my loving bride !"

Gods and Spirits, bright Immortals to that royal *Yajna* came,
Men of every race and nation, kings and chiefs of righteous fame;

Softly through the halls of splendour cool and scented breezes blew,
Fragrance of celestial blossoms o'er the royal chambers flew.

Sita saw the bright Celestials, monarchs gathered from afar,
Saw her royal lord and husband bright as heaven-ascending star,

Saw her sons as hermit-minstrels beaming with a radiance high,
Milk of love suffused her bosom, tear of sorrow filled her eye !

Rama's queen and Janak's daughter, will she stoop her cause to plead,
Witness of her truth and virtue can a loving woman need ?

Oh ! her woman's heart is bursting, and her day on earth is done,
And she pressed her heaving bosom, slow and sadly thus begun :

*" If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of birth,
Spare a daughter's shame and anguish and receive her, Mother Earth !*

*If in duty and devotion I have laboured undefiled,
Mother Earth ! who bore this woman, once again receive thy child !*

*If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,
Mother Earth ! relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life ! "*

Then the earth was rent and parted, and a golden throne arose,
Held aloft by jewelled *Nagas* as the leaves enfold the rose,

And the Mother in embraces held her spotless sinless Child,
Sainted Janak's saintly daughter, pure and true and undefiled,

Gods and men proclaim her virtue ! But fair Sita is no more,
Lone is Rama's loveless bosom and his days of bliss are o'er !

CONCLUSION

IN the concluding portion of the *Uttara* or Supplemental Book, the descendants of Rama and his brothers are described as the founders of the great cities and kingdoms which flourished in Western India in the fourth and fifth centuries before the Christian Era.

Bharat had two sons, Taksha and Pushkala. The former founded Taksha-sila, to the east of the Indus, and known to Alexander and the Greeks as Taxila. The latter founded Pushkala-vati, to the west of the Indus, and known to Alexander and the Greeks as Peukelaotis. Thus the sons of Bharat are said to have founded kingdoms which flourished on either side of the Indus river in the fourth century before Christ.

Lakshman had two sons, Angada and Chandraketu. The former founded the kingdom of Karupada, and the latter founded the city of Chandrakanti in the Malwa country.

Satrugna had two sons, Suvahu and Satrughati. The former became king of Mathura, and the latter ruled in Vidisha.

Rama had two sons, Lava and Kusa. The former ruled in Sravasti, which was the capital of Oudh at the time of the Buddha in the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ. The latter founded Kusavati at the foot of the Vindhya mountains.

The death of Rama and his brothers was in accordance with Hindu ideas of the death of the righteous. Lakshman died under somewhat peculiar circumstances. A messenger from heaven sought a secret conference with Rama, and Rama placed Lakshman at the gate, with strict injunctions that whoever intruded on the private conference should be slain. Lakshman himself had to disturb the conference by the solicitation of the celestial *rishi* Durvasa, who

always appears on earth to create mischief. And true to the orders passed by Rama, he surrendered his life by penances, and went to heaven.

In the fulness of time, Rama and his other brothers left Ayodhya, crossed the Sarayu, surrendered their mortal life, and entered heaven.

EPILOGUE BY THE TRANSLATOR

ANCIENT India, like ancient Greece, boasts of two great Epics. The *Mahabharata*, based on the legends and traditions of a great historical war, is the Iliad of India. The *Ramayana*, describing the wanderings and adventures of a prince banished from his country, has so far something in common with the Odyssey. Having placed before English readers a condensed translation of the Indian Iliad, I have thought it necessary to prepare the present condensed translation of the Indian Odyssey to complete the work. The two together comprise the whole of the Epic literature of the ancient Hindus; and the two together present us with the most graphic and life-like picture that exists of the civilisation and culture, the political and social life, the religion and thought of ancient India.

The *Ramayana*, like the *Mahabharata*, is a growth of centuries, but the main story is more distinctly the creation of one mind. Among the many cultured races that flourished in Northern India about a thousand years before Christ, the Kosalas of Oudh and the Videhas of North Behar were perhaps the most cultured. Their monarchs were famed for their learning as well as for their prowess. Their priests distinguished themselves by founding schools of learning which were known all over India. Their sacrifices and gifts to the learned drew together the most renowned men of the age from distant regions. Their celebrated Universities (*Parishads*) were frequented by students from surrounding countries. Their compilations of the old *Vedic Hymns* were used in various parts of India. Their elaborate *Brahmanas* or Commentaries on the Vedas were handed down from generation to generation by priestly families. Their researches into the mysteries of the Soul,

and into the nature of the One Universal Soul which pervades the creation, are still preserved in the ancient *Upanishads*, and are among the most valuable heritages which have been left to us by the ancients. And their researches and discoveries in science and philosophy gave them the foremost place among the gifted races of ancient India.

It would appear that the flourishing period of the Kosalas and the Videhas had already passed away, and the traditions of their prowess and learning had become a revered memory in India, when the poet composed the great Epic which perpetuates their fame. Distance of time lent a higher lustre to the achievements of these gifted races, and the age in which they flourished appeared to their descendants as the Golden Age of India. To the imagination of the poet, the age of the Kosalas and Videhas was associated with all that is great and glorious, all that is righteous and true. His description of Ayodhya, the capital town of the Kosalas, is a description of an ideal seat of righteousness. Dasa-ratha the king of the Kosalas is an ideal king, labouring for the good of a loyal people. Rama, the eldest son of Dasa-ratha and the hero of the Epic, is an ideal prince, brave and accomplished, devoted to his duty, unfaltering in his truth. The king of the Videhas, Janak (or rather Janaka, but I have omitted the final *a* of some names in this translation), is a monarch and a saint. Sita, the daughter of Janak and the heroine of the Epic, is the ideal of a faithful woman and a devoted wife. A pious reverence for the past pervades the great Epic; a lofty admiration of what is true and ennobling in the human character sanctifies the work; and delineations of the domestic life, and the domestic virtues of the ancient Hindus, rich in tenderness and pathos, endear the picture to the hearts of the people of India to the present day.

It is probable that the first connected narrative of the Epic was composed within a few centuries after the glorious age of the Kosalas and the Videhas. But the work became so popular that it grew with age. It grew,—not like the *Mahabharata* by the incorporation of new episodes, tales and traditions,—but by fresh descriptions of the same scenes and incidents. Generations of poets

were never tired of adding to the description of scenes which were dear to the Hindu, and patient Hindu listeners were never tired of listening to such repetitions. The virtues of Rama and the faithfulness of Sita were described again and again in added lines and cantos. The grief of the old monarch at the banishment of the prince, and the sorrows of mother at parting from her son, were depicted by succeeding versifiers in fresh verses. The loving devotion of Rama's brothers, the sanctity of saints, and the peacefulness of the hermitages visited by Rama, were described with endless reiteration. The long account of the grief of Rama at the loss of his wife, and stories of unending battles waged for her recovery, occupied generations of busy interpolators.

The *Sloka* verse in which much of the *Ramayana* is composed is the easiest of Sanscrit metres, and afforded a fatal facility to poets ; and often we have the same scene, fully and amply described in one canto repeated again in the two or three succeeding cantos. The unity of the composition is lost by these additions, and the effect of the narrative is considerably weakened by such endless repetition.

It would appear that the original work ended with the sixth Book, which describes the return of the hero to his country and to his loving subjects. The seventh Book is called *Uttara* or Supplemental, and in it we are told something of the dimensions of the poem, apparently after the fatal process of additions and interpolations had gone on for centuries. We are informed that the poem consists of six Books and a Supplemental Book ; and that it comprises 500 cantos and 24,000 couplets. And we are also told in this Supplemental Book that the descendants of Rama and his brothers founded some of the great towns and states which, we know from other sources, flourished in the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ. It is probable therefore that the Epic, commenced after 1000 B.C., had assumed something like its present shape a few centuries before the Christian Era.

The foregoing account of the genesis and growth of the *Ramayana* will indicate in what respects it resembles the *Maha-bharata*, and in what respects the two Indian Epics differ from each other. The *Maha-bharata* grew out of the legends and traditions of a great

historical war between the Kurus and the Panchalas ; the *Ramayana* grew out of the recollections of the golden age of the Kosalas and the Videhas. The characters of the *Maha-bharata* are characters of flesh and blood, with the virtues and crimes of great actors in the historic world ; the characters of the *Ramayana* are more often the ideals of manly devotion to truth, and of womanly faithfulness and love in domestic life. The poet of the *Maha-bharata* relies on the real or supposed incidents of a war handed down from generation to generation in songs and ballads, and weaves them into an immortal work of art ; the poet of the *Ramayana* conjures up the memories of a golden age, constructs lofty ideals of piety and faith, and describes with infinite pathos domestic scenes and domestic affections which endear the work to modern Hindus. As a heroic poem the *Maha-bharata* stands on a higher level ; as a poem delineating the softer emotions of our everyday life the *Ramayana* sends its roots deeper into the hearts and minds of the million in India.

These remarks will be probably made clearer by a comparison of what may be considered parallel passages in the two great Epics. In heroic description, the bridal of Sita is poor and commonplace, compared with the birdal of Draupadi with all the hustle and tumult of a real contest among warlike suitors. The rivalry between Rama and Ravan, between Lakshman and Indrajit, is feeble in comparison with the life-long jealousy and hatred which animated Arjun and Karna, Bhima and Duryodhan. Sita's protest and defiance, spoken to Ravan when he carried her away, lack the fire and the spirit of Draupadi's appeal on the occasion when she was insulted in court. The Council of War held by Ravan is a poor affair in comparison with the Council of War held by Yudhisthir in the Matsya kingdom. And Bibhishan's final appeal for peace and Ravan's scornful reply will scarcely compare with the sublime eloquence with which Krishna implored the old monarch of the Kurus not to plunge into a disastrous war, and the deep determination with which Duryodhan replied :—

“ Town nor village, mart nor hamlet, help us righteous Gods in heaven,
Spot that needle's point can cover shall not unto them be given ! ”

In the whole of the *Ramayana* there is no character with the fiery determination and the deep-seated hatred for the foe which inspire Karna or Arjun, Bhima or Duryodhan. And in the unending battles waged by Rama and his allies there is no incident so stirring, so animated, so thrilling, as the fall of Abhimanyu, the vengeance of Arjun, the final contest between Arjun and Karna, or the final contest between Bhima and Duryodhan. The whole tenor of the *Ramayana* is subdued and calm, pacific and pious ; the whole tenor of the *Mahabharata* is warlike and spirited.

And yet, without rivalling the heroic grandeur of the *Mahabharata* the *Ramayana* is immeasurably superior in its delineation of those softer and perhaps deeper emotions which inter into our everyday life, and hold the world together. And these descriptions, essentially of Hindu life, are yet so true to nature that they apply to all races and nations.

There is something indescribably touching and tender in the description of the love of Rama for his subjects and the loyalty of his people towards Rama,—that loyalty which has even been a part of the Hindu character in every age—

“ As a father to his children to his loving men he came,

Blessed our homes and maids and matrons till our infants lisped his name,

For our humble woes and troubles Rama hath the ready tear,
To our humble tales of suffering Rama lends his willing ear !”

Deeper than this was Rama's duty towards his father and his father's fondness for Rama ; and the portion of the Epic which narrates the dark scheme by which the prince was at last torn from the heart and home of his dying father is one of the most powerful and pathetic passages in Indian literature. The step-mother of Rama, won by the virtues and the kindness of the prince, regards his proposed coronation with pride and pleasure, but her old nurse creeps into her confidence like a creeping serpent, and envenoms her heart with the poison of her own wickedness. She arouses the

slumbering jealousy of a woman and awakens the alarms of a mother, till—

“ Like a slow but deadly poison worked the ancient nurse’s tears,
And a wife’s undying impulse mingled with a mother’s fears !”

The nurse’s dark insinuations work on the mind of the queen till she becomes a desperate woman, resolved to maintain her own influence on her husband, and to see her own son on the throne. The determination of the young queen tells with terrible effect on the weakness and vacillation of the feeble old monarch, and Rama is banished at last. And the scene closes with a pathetic story in which the monarch recounts his misdeed of past years, accepts his present suffering as the fruit of that misdeed, and dies in agony for his banished son. The inner workings of the human heart and of human motives, the dark intrigue of a scheming dependant, the awakening jealousy and alarm of a wife and a mother, the determination of a woman and an imperious queen, and the feebleness and despair and death of a fond old father and husband, have never been more vividly described. Shakespeare himself has not depicted the workings of stormy passions in the human heart more graphically or more vividly, with greater truth or with more terrible power.

It is truth and power in the depicting of such scenes, and not in the delineation of warriors and warlike incidents, that the *Ramayana* excels. It is in the delineation of domestic incidents, domestic affections and domestic jealousies, which are appreciated by the prince and the peasant alike, that the *Ramayana* bases its appeal to the hearts of the million in India. And beyond all this, the righteous devotion of Rama, and the faithfulness and womanly love of Sita, run like two threads of gold through the whole fabric of the Epic, and ennoble and sanctify the work in the eyes of Hindus.

Rama and Sita are the Hindu ideals of a Perfect Man and a Perfect Woman; their truth under trials and temptations, their endurance under privations, and their devotion to duty under all vicissitudes of fortune, form the Hindu ideal of a Perfect Life.

In this respect the *Ramayana* gives us a true picture of Hindu faith and righteous life as Dante's "Divine Comedy" gives us a picture of the faith and belief of the Middle Ages in Europe. Our own ideals in the present day may not be the ideals of the tenth century before Christ or the fourteenth century after Christ; but mankind will not willingly let die those great creations of the past which shadow forth the ideals and beliefs of interesting periods in the progress of human civilisation.

Sorrow and suffering, trial and endurance, are a part of the Hindu ideal of a Perfect Life of righteousness. Rama suffers for fourteen years in exile, and is chastened by privations and misfortunes, before he ascends the throne of his father. In a humble way this course of training was passed through by every pious Hindu of the ancient times. Every Aryan boy in India was taken away from his parents at an early age, and lived the hard life of an anchorite under his teacher for twelve or twenty-four or thirty-six years, before he entered the married life and settled down as a householder. Every Aryan boy assumed the rough garment and the staff and girdle of a student, lived as a mendicant and begged his food from door to door, attended on his preceptor as a menial, and thus trained himself in endurance and suffering as well as in the traditional learning of the age, before he became a householder. The pious Hindu saw in Rama's life the ideal of a true Hindu life, the success and the triumph which follow upon endurance and faith and devotion to duty. It is the truth and endurance of Rama under sufferings and privations which impart the deepest lessons to the Hindu character, and is the highest ideal of a Hindu righteous life. The ancient ideal may seem to us far-fetched in these days, but we can never fully comprehend the great moral Epic of the Hindus unless we endeavour to study fully and clearly its relations to old Hindu ideas and old Hindu life.

And if trial and endurance are a part of a Hindu's ideal of a man's life, devotion and self-abnegation are still more essentially a part of his ideal of a woman's life. Sita holds a place in the hearts of women in India which no other creation of a poet's imagination holds among any other nation on earth. There is not a Hindu

woman whose earliest and tenderest recollections do not cling round the story of Sita's sufferings and Sita's faithfulness, told in the nursery, taught in the family circle, remembered and cherished through life. Sita's adventures in a desolate forest and in a hostile prison only represent in an exaggerated form the humbler trials of a woman's life ; and Sita's endurance and faithfulness teach her devotion to duty in all trials and troubles of life. "For," said Sita:—

"For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life !
Therefore bid me seek the jungle and in pathless forests roam,
Where the wild deer freely ranges and the tiger makes his home,
Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will Sita rove,
Waste no thought on home or kindred, nestling in her husband's love !"

The ideal of life was joy and beauty and gladness in ancient Greece ; the ideal of life was piety and endurance and devotion in ancient India. The tale of Helen was a tale of womanly beauty and loveliness which charmed the western world. The tale of Sita was a tale of womanly faith and self-abnegation which charmed and fascinated the Hindu world. Repeated trials bring out in brighter relief the unfaltering truth of Sita's character ; she goes to a second banishment in the woods with the same trust and devotion to her lord as before, and she returns once more, and sinks into the bosom of her Mother Earth, true in death as she had been true in life. The creative imagination of the Hindus has conceived no loftier and holier character than Sita ; the literature of the world has not produced a higher ideal of womanly love, womanly truth, and womanly devotion.

The modern reader will now comprehend why India produced, and has preserved for well-nigh three thousand years, two Epics instead of one national Epic. No work of the imagination abides long unless it is animated by some sparks of imperishable truth, unless it truly embodies some portion of our human feelings, human

faith and human life. The *Maha-bharata* depicts the political life of ancient India, with all its valour and heroism, ambition and lofty chivalry. The *Ramayana* embodies the domestic and religious life of ancient India, with all its tenderness and sweetness, its endurance and devotion. The one picture without the other were incomplete; and we should know but little of the ancient Hindus if we did not comprehend their inner life and faith as well as their political life and their warlike virtues. The two together gives us a true and graphic picture of ancient Indian life and civilisation; and no nation on earth has preserved a more faithful picture of its glorious past.

In condensing the *Ramayana* with its more than 24,000 Sanscrit couplets into 2000 English couplets I have followed the same plan which was adopted in my translation of the *Maha-bharata*. I have selected those sections or cantos which tell the leading incidents of the Epic, and have translated the whole or main portions of them, and these selected passages are linked together by short notes. The plan, as was explained before, has this advantage, that the story is told not by the translator in his own way, but by the poet himself; the passages placed before the reader are not the translator's abridgment of a long poem, but selected passages from the poem itself. It is the ancient poet of India, and not the translator, who narrates the old story; but he narrates only such portions of it as describe the leading incidents. We are told that the sons of Rama recited the whole poem of 24,000 verses, divided into 500 cantos or sections in twenty-five days. The modern reader has not the patience of the Hindu listener of the old school; but a selection of the leading portions of that immortal song arranged in 2000 verses and in 84 short sections, may possibly receive a hearing, even from the much-distracted modern reader.

While speaking of my own translation I must not fail to make some mention of my predecessors in this work. The magnificent edition of the *Ramayana* (Bengal recension), published with an Italian translation by Gorresio, at the expense of Charles Albert King of Sardinia in 1843-67, first introduced this great Epic to the European public; and it was not long before M. Hippolyte Fauche presented the European world with a French translation of this edition. The Benares

recension of the *Ramayana* has since been lithographed in Bombay; and a printed edition of the same recension with Ramannuja's commentary was brought out by the venerable Hem Chandra Vidyaratna in Calcutta in 1869-85. The talented and indefatigable Mr. Ralph Griffith, C. I. E., who has devoted a lifetime to translating Indian poetry into English, has produced an almost complete translation of the first six Books in more than 24,000 English couplets, and has an abstract of the seventh Book in prose. And a complete translation of the *Ramayana* into English prose has since appeared in Calcutta.

The object of the present work is very different from that of these meritorious editions and translations. The purpose of this work, as explained above, is not to attempt a complete translation of a voluminous Epic, but to place before the general reader the leading story of that Epic by translating a number of selected passages and connecting them together by short notes. The purpose of this volume is not to repeat the long poem which Rama's sons are supposed to have recited in 24,000 Sanscrit couplets, but only to narrate the main incidents of that poem within the reasonable limit of 2000 verses. And the general reader who seeks for a practical acquaintance with the great Indian poem within a reasonable compass will, it is hoped, find in this book a handy and not unacceptable translation of the leading story of the Epic.

I have stated before that in India, the *Ramayana* is still a living tradition and a living faith. It forms the basis of the moral instruction of a nation, and it is a part of the lives of two hundred millions of people. It is necessary to add that when the modern languages of India were first formed out of the ancient Sanscrit and Prakrits, in the ninth and tenth centuries after Christ, the *Ramayana* had the greatest influence in inspiring our modern poets and forming our modern tongues. Southern India took the lead, and a translation of the *Ramayana* in the Tamil language appeared as early as 1100 A.D. Northern India and Bengal and Bombay followed the example; Tulasi Das's *Ramayana* is the great classic in the Hindi language, Krittibas's *Ramayana* is a classic in the Bengali language, and Sridhar's *Ramayana* is a classic in the Mahratta language. Genera-

tions of Hindus in all parts of India have studied the ancient story in these modern translations; they have heard it recited in the houses of the rich; and they have seen it acted on the stage at religious festivals in every great town and every populous village through the length and breadth of India.

More than this, the story of Rama has inspired our religious reformers, and purified the popular faith of our modern times. Rama, the true and dutiful, was accepted as the Spirit of God descended on earth, as an incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver of the World. The great teacher Ramanuja proclaimed the monotheism of Vishnu in Southern India in the twelfth century; the reformer Ramananda proclaimed the same faith in Northern India in the thirteenth or fourteenth century; and his follower the gifted Kabir conceived the bold idea of uniting Hindus and Mahomedans in the worship of One God. "The God of the Hindus," he said, "is the God of the Mahomedans, be he invoked as *Rama* or *Ali*." "The city of the Hindu God is Benares, and the city of the Mahomedan God is Mecca; but search your hearts, and there you will find the God both of Hindus and Mahomedans." "If the Creator dwells in tabernacles, whose dwelling is the universe?"

The reformer Chaitanya preached the same sublime monotheism in Bengal, and the reformer Nanak in the Punjab, in the sixteenth century. And down to the present day the popular mind in India, led away by the worship of many images in many temples, nevertheless holds fast to the cardinal idea of One God, and believes the heroes of the ancient Epics—*Krishna* and *Rama*—to be the incarnations of that God. The various sects of the Hindus, specially the sects of Vishnu and of Siva who form the great majority of the people, quarrel about a name as they often did in Europe in the Middle Ages, and each sect gives to the Deity the special name by which the sect is known. In the teeming villages of Bengal, in the ancient shrines of Northern India, and far away in the towns and hamlets of Southern India, the prevailing faith of the million is a popular monotheism underlying the various ceremonies in honour of various images and forms,—and that popular monotheism generally recognises the heroes of the two ancient Epics,—*Krishna* and *Rama*, as the

earthly incarnations of the great God who pervades and rules the universe.

To know the Indian Epics is to understand the Indian people better. And to trace the influence of the Indian Epics on the life and civilisation of the nation, and on the development of their modern languages, literatures, and religious reforms, is to comprehend the real history of the people during three thousand years.

ROMESH DUTT.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON,
13th August 1889.

(1) Hanumanth Sen

LAYS OF ANCIENT INDIA.

TO MY LOVING DAUGHTERS
AMALA AND SARALA

I

Dedicate this Volume

WITH

A FATHER'S BLESSING AND LOVE.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

[*Revised.*]

INDIAN poetry has been made known to English readers by distinguished English writers. A hundred years ago Sir William Jones translated the beautiful play of Sakuntala into English, and for the first time drew the attention of European readers to the beauty of Indian thought and poetry. H. H. Wilson followed in his footsteps, and rendered into graceful English verse some others of the best dramatic works in the Sanscrit language, and also a beautiful poem called Meghaduta. Wilson's English translation of the Rig Veda has since been completed and published ; and Mr. Griffiths has brought out a commendable metrical translation of the great epic Ramayana. Max Muller has translated the ancient Upanishads and the Buddhist work Dhammapada into English prose ; and the genius of Sir Edwin Arnold has made thousands of readers in Europe and in America familiar with the wealth of Indian thought and imagery, and the beauty of Buddhist precepts and doctrines.

The time has come for placing before English readers a carefully prepared book of selections from the entire range of ancient Indian poetry. Such a book of selections should convey something not only of the beauty of Indian poetry in general, but also of the distinctive features of the poetry of each special period,—something of the freshness and simplicity of the Vedic Hymns, the lofty thought of the Upanishads, the unsurpassed beauty of Buddhist precepts,

and the incomparable richness and imagery of the later or classical Sanscrit poetry. And it seems to me that such a book, comprising specimens from the literature of successive periods, is likely to give the English reader a general bird's-eye view of Indian poetry, Indian thought, and Indian religion.

I cannot help feeling my own unfitness for undertaking such a task in a language which is not my mother tongue. But nevertheless the reception which has been accorded to my work on *Civilisation in Ancient India* emboldens me to make the attempt; and I believe that the readers of my previous work, who have studied the history of ancient India through its successive periods, will feel some interest in the *Lays of Ancient India*, illustrating the life and thought of those periods.

The literature of ancient India, like its history, divides itself into five successive periods. The Vedic period believed to cover five or six centuries, from 2000 to 1400 B.C.; and of the thousand hymns of the Rig Veda which have been left to us I have translated a dozen in the present volume. The freshness and joyousness of the Vedic Hymns characterise them as a true and faithful picture of the times in which they were composed.

The second or epic period is believed to cover another five or six hundred years, from 1400 to about 800 B.C. The great epics of India, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, were, in their original shape, composed in this period, and describe the deeds and wars of nations who lived in the Gangetic valley in this age. I have confined my selections of this period to those remarkable compositions, the Upanishads, which are among the most valuable works in the literature

of the world. They show us how the Nature-worship of the Rig Veda developed itself into the worship of Nature's God,—the Universal Soul from whom the whole universe has emanated, and into whom the whole universe will resolve itself. This is the essence of the Hindu religion and of Hindu thought, and we find this thought in its purest and best form in the Upanishads. They are in prose, but breathe the sublimest poetry, and I have ventured to translate six passages from these venerable works in English verse.

The third period is one of five centuries, from 800 B.C. to the time of Alexander the Great and Chandragupta of Magadha, about 320 B.C. Philosophy and science and grammar were cultivated with remarkable success in India in this period ; and the ancient sacrificial rules and social and domestic rules were also compiled in compact works. And it was in this period that Gautama Buddha was born and preached that noble religion which is now the faith of a third of the human race. The Buddhist Scriptures belong to this age, and have been faithfully preserved in the Pali language in Ceylon.

The fourth period covers about eight centuries, from B. C. 320 to about 500 A.D., and was the age when Buddhism prevailed in India side by side with the older creed of the Hindus. The imperial Asoka the Great ruled in this period, and issued those celebrated edicts which display to us, after the lapse of over two thousand years, his power, his greatness, and his righteousness. I have selected six passages from the Buddhist scriptures and legends, and from the Edicts of Asoka, as specimens of the literature and thought of these third and fourth periods.

The fifth and last epoch of ancient Indian history and

literature covers some seven centuries, from about 500 to 1200 A.D. The voluminous Puranas were compiled in this age, which is therefore called the Puranic age; and what is known as the Kavya poetry belongs to this age. The lovely creations of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and a host of other poets and dramatists throw a brilliant light over this period, and make the task of the translator a difficult and almost an impossible one.

A number of short epics, or Kavyas, based mostly on the great ancient epics of India, were composed in this age; and these short epics are favourite subjects of study with the modern Hindus. They convey in fact the most perfect picture that we possess of Hindu thought, Hindu poetry, and even of Hindu religion in the later times, and no book of Indian poetry can pretend to be complete without some specimens of this kind of composition. I have, therefore, selected some of these short epics, and condensed them into English verse, as fair specimens of the literature of this fifth and last period of Sanskrit poetry.

It is well known that the Indian drama is even richer than Indian poetry, but I have refrained in this volume from giving any specimens of the drama. In the first place, a play cannot be judged by extracts, and I cannot make room for entire plays. And in the second place, I could not render them as they have been rendered by the gifted H. H. Wilson. Indeed I shall consider my labours amply rewarded if the present volume can take humble place by the side of Wilson's *Theatre of the Hindus*.

Romesh Dutt,

WIESEBADEN, GERMANY.
August and September 1893.

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

TEN years have elapsed since the *Lays of Ancient India* were first published, and it has been thought necessary to place them now before English readers in a revised form.

Some alterations have been made in the selections previously made, and every poem has been carefully revised, and almost re-written, to make the collection more acceptable.

Since the publication of the first edition of this work, I have placed before English readers condensed metrical translations of the two great Indian Epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. No selections from those Epics have therefore been included in this collection. The reception which those Epics have met in England and in America inspires me with a hope that the specimens of minor Sanscrit poetry, included in the present volume, will also be read with some interest.

Romesh Dutt.

BOMBAY, }
March 1903. }

CONTENTS.

Page.

Hymns of the Rig Veda.

1.	INDRA, THE RAIN-GOD	3
2.	INDRA, THE SUPREME GOD	6
3.	VARUNA, GOD OF CHANGELESS LAW	10
4.	VARUNA, GOD OF MERCY	13
5.	SAVITRI, THE SUN-GOD	15
6.	USHAS, THE DAWN-GODDESS	16
7.	AGNI, GOD OF FIRE	20
8.	KSHETRA-PATI, GOD OF AGRICULTURE	22
9.	PUSHAN, GOD OF PASTURE	24
10.	A BATTLE HYMN	26
11.	THE ALL-CREATOR	28
12.	THE GOLDEN CHILD	30

II. Passages from the Upanishads.

1.	THE UNIVERSAL SOUL	35
2.	THE LEGEND OF SATYAKAMA	36
3.	THE LEGEND OF GARGI	39
4.	THE LEGEND OF MAITREYI	42
5.	THE LEGEND OF BALAKI	45
6.	DEATH'S SECRET	48

III. Passages from Buddhist Literature.

1.	BUDDHA'S BIRTH	53
2.	BUDDHA'S DEATH	54
3.	BUDDHA'S PRECEPTS	55
4.	ASOKA'S MESSAGE TO HIS PEOPLE	57
5.	ASOKA'S MESSAGE TO FOREIGN NATIONS	59
6.	THE LEGEND OF MUKTALATA	62

IV. The Bridal of Uma, by Kalidasa.

1. UMA'S BIRTH	71
2. UMA'S YOUTH	78
3. UMA'S PENANCE AND LOVE	87

The Penance of Arjun by Bharavi.

1. DRAUPADI'S REMONSTRANCE	99
2. VYASA'S ADVICE	105
3. ARJUN'S PENANCE	112
4. THE ADVENT OF INDRA	117
5. THE ADVENT OF SIVA	126
6. PRAYER AND BLESSING	132

I

Hymns of the Rig Veda

"The Rig Veda consists of 1028 hymns, comprising over ten thousand verses. The hymns are generally simple, and betray a childlike and simple faith in the Gods, to whom sacrifices are offered and libations of the Soma juice are poured, and who are asked for increase of progeny, cattle, and wealth, and implored to help the Aryans in their still doubtful struggle against the black aborigines of the Punjab."

—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. p. 32.

HYMNS OF THE RIG VEDA

I

Indra the Rain-God

“Vritra is supposed to confine the waters, and will not let them descend until the Sky-God or Rain-God, Indra, strikes the monster with his thunderbolt. The captive waters then descend in copious showers, rivers rise almost instantaneously, and gods and men rejoice over the changed face of nature.”

Civilisation in Ancient India, vol. i. p. 79.

I

I will sing the wondrous story,—
Thunder-armed Indra's glory,—
How he won from Vritra's might
Captive waters sparkling bright,
Cleft for them the mountain way,
Rolled the rivers rich and gay !

2

Indra pierced the dragon cloud,—
Darkening mountains in a shroud,
Twashtri forged the lightning-dart,—
Fashioned with celestial art,
As the milch-kine to the fold
Rivers to the ocean rolled !

3

Like a bull, impetuous, strong,
Indra, hymned in ancient song,
Drank the Soma three times given,
Grasped the forked brand of heaven,
Smote the first-born fiend of might,
Rolling up the mountain's height !

4

Indra ! When you slew the first-born,
Cleared the shadows of the red morn,
When with bright-flame-fashioned arms
You dispelled his spells and charms,
Leaped the light of ruddy dawn,
Foe or fiend of gloom was none !

5

Darkling Vritra hid the world,
Lightning-lances Indra hurled,
And his thunders' deadly stroke
Clouds to pieces rent and broke,
Like a tree by woodsman felled
Fell the fiend by Indra quelled !

6

Feeble foe, by madness fired,
Combat with the strong desired ;
Many-slayer, stout of hand,
Indra hurled his restless brand ;
How the vanquished splashing fell,
How the streams did roar and swell !

7

Footless, handless, in his rage
Vritra still the war would wage ;
On his shoulders deep and broad
Fell the thunders of the God ;
Boastful but emasculate,
Crushed and torn he sought his fate !

8

Like the leaping wild cascade
Torrents rolled above the dead ;
Erst the coiling fiend of gloom
Compassed waters in his womb,
Now prostrate and low he lay,
Rivers laughed in boisterous play !

9

Mother rain-cloud gathered new,
Indra to the combat flew,
Hurled new thunders dark and dun,
Smote the mother like the son ;
As the calf beside the cow,
Whelp and dam alike lay low !

10

Rolled the rivers fresh and new,
Ceaseless waters onward flew,
Bursting torrents, copious fed,
Bore away the shapeless dead ;
Indra's foe, bereft of breath,
Slept the endless sleep of death !

11

Light was prisoned in the gloom,
Indra freed her from its womb ;
Rain was prisoned in the cloud,
Indra smote the demon proud ;
Oped the caverns of the night,
Gave us rain and gave us light !

12

Vain were Vritra's angry blows,
Indra shielded him from foes ;
And he freed the captive kine,
Conquered Soma's sparkling wine,
Rolled seven rivers famed of old,
Feeding nations as they rolled !

13

Bolt of thunder, storm of hail,
 'Gainst the hero harmless fell ;
 Shrouds of mist and gusts of rain
 'Gainst the scatheless God were vain ;
 Vritra strove in furious mood,
 Calm the conquering Indra stood !

14

Indra ! When thy foe was dead,
 Didst thou dimly, darkly dread
 Some avenger in the fray ;
 Didst thou like a bird of prey
 Swoop o'er ninety streams and nine
 Through the blue sky which was thine ?

15

Thunder armed Sovran-king,
 Of each life and lifeless thing,
 Of each creature in his station,
 Of each clime and race and nation !
 Spokes are circled by the rim,
 Worlds encircled live in *Him* !

Rig Veda, I. 32.

II

Indra the Supreme God

I

Highest of Immortals bright,
 God of gods by lofty might,
 He, before whose prowess high
 Tremble earth and upper sky,
 He is,—mortals, hear my verse,—
 Indra, Lord of Universe !

2

He, who fixed the staggering earth,
Shaped the mountains at their birth,
Sky's blue vault held up and bent,
Measured out the firmament,
He is,—listen to my verse,—
Indra, Lord of Universe!

3

He, who quelled the cloud-fiend's might,
Rolled the seven great rivers bright,
Pierced the caverns of the gloom,
Conquered bright kine from its womb,
Lit the lightning's fire of old,
He is Indra, warrior bold!

4

He, who shaped with cunning hand
Wonders of the sea and land,
Quelled the Aryan's impious foe,
Doomed the Dasa to his woe,
Robbed the bandit in his hold,
He is Indra, hunter bold!

5

Have you, doubting, questioned me,—
Where is Indra, who is He?
Mortals, in your impious thought
Have you whispered, — He is not!
Jealous God! In vengeance dire
He can smite ye in his ire!

6

But his ceaseless mercies seek
High and lowly, strong and weak,
Priest who chants his sacred lays,
Worshipper who sings his praise,
Him who by the altar's flame,
Pours libations to his name!

7

His the kine and steeds of war,
 Village home and battle car ;
 His right arm uplifts the sun,
 Opes the ruddy gates of dawn ;
 His red bolt the dark cloud rends,
 Grateful showers for mortals sends !

8

Hosts advancing to the fray
 Cry to him on battle's day ;
 And the strong man shouts his fame,
 And the lowly lisps his name ;
 Warrior-chief on battle-car
 Prays to Indra, God of war !

9

We but triumph by his blade,
 Nations court his friendly aid ;
 Moveless hills that heavenward tower
 Tremble at his mighty power ;
 And the world so vast and broad,
 Images the mighty God !

10

Swift his weapons, red and dire,
 To the impious speak his ire ;
 And his favours never rain
 On the boastful and the vain ;
 And his red right hand can smite
 Godless Dasas in the fight !

11

For he slew Sambara bold,
 Sheltered in his mountain hold,
 In the fortieth autumn-tide ;
 Slew the dragon in his pride,
 Vritra, rain-withholding cloud,
 Titan of the inky shroud !

12

Seven bright rays bedeck his bow,
Seven great rivers from him flow ;
Thunder-arméd, quick to ire,
He in vengeance swift and dire,
Laid the proud Rauhina low,
Heaven-aspiring impious foe !

13

Earth and sky confess his sway,
Trembling hills obeisance pay ;
Wielder of the bolt of heaven,
Be to him libations given ;—
He accepts this Soma wine,
Listens to this lay of mine !

14

Brew the Soma fresh and fair,
Pour libations rich and rare,
For he blesses when we pray,
Helps the singer of his lay ;—
He accepts this Soma wine,
Listens to this lay of mine !

15

Mighty Indra, strong and true,
Hymns to thee and gifts are due,
And our priests libations pour
For thy blessings' endless store ;
Speak to us,—for thou art near,—
Let our brave sons know no fear !

Rig Veda, II. 12.

III

Varuna, God of Law

"The eminent German scholar, Dr. Roth, is of opinion that before the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians separated, Varuna was the highest and holiest of the Gods of their ancestors, and represented the spiritual side of their religion. After the separation had taken place, this deity of righteousness was translated in Iran into Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Deity. And although in India, Varuna yielded the foremost place among Gods to the young and vigorous rain-giver, Indra, still he never became divested of that sanctity and holiness which entered into his first conception, and the holiest hymns of the Rig Veda are his, not Indra's "

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. p. 76.

I

What Immortal wakes my song,
Unto whom my lays belong ?
Fair Aditi ! Shine before us,
Mother of Light ! To thee restore us, —
That my father I may see,
With my mother I may be !

2

Flame Immortal, Agni bright,
We invoke thy holy light !
Priest and God ! He shines before us,
To Aditi shall restore us, —
That my father I may see,
With my mother I may be !

3

Bright Savitri, Sun unrisen,
Beam upon our earthly prison !
Thine is every golden treasure,
Grant to us our earthly measure, —
Grant, they never may grow less,
Hope and health and happiness !

4

Golden-handed God of Light,
Grant thy stainless favours bright,
May thy gifts upon us wait
Free from sin, reproach, and hate,—
Grant they never may grow less,
Hope and health and happiness !

5

Life-inspiring God of Day,
Mortals for thy favours pray,
Thou hast wealth for sons of men
Affluence beyond their ken,—
Radiant Bhaga deals thy grace,
Hope and health and happiness !

6

Lord Varuna, Righteous King,
Joyous heavens thy glories sing ;
Not the birds that sail the sky
Thy resistless speed can vie,
Not the winds in ceaseless course
Nor the torrent's matchless force !

7

Lord Varuna, Hallowed Light,
Throned in Heaven's etherial height,
Thine the radiance, rooted high,
Streaming downwards from the sky ;
May it fill our heart with gladness
Quell the gloom of sin and sadness !

8

Thine the mighty hand hath laid,
Pathway for the sun to tread,
Thine the finger, day to day
Points to him his viewless way,
Thine the rays that darkness banish,
Sorrow, sin, and sadness vanish !

9

Hundred thousand balms that heal
From thy hands on mortals steal ;
Hundred thousand blessings pour
From thy mercy's endless store ;
Teach us, future sins to shun,
Save us, Lord, from sins we've done !

10

Yonder radiant stars of night,
Where are they when dawns the light ?
Nature owns thy changeless law,
Universe obeys in awe,
And the orb of silver ray
Silent walks her nightly way !

11

Teach me, Lord, to chant thy lays,
And with gifts repeat thy praise ;
Stay with us devoid of wrath,
Save us from the downward path ;
World-extending in thy might,
Ruler of the realms of light !

12

Sages tell me night and day,
And my whispering heart doth say :—
Let the sinner in his chains
Ask his grace who grace ordains ;
He is King and he is Love,
Bonds of sin he can remove !

13

Shackled to the three-fold stake,
Suppliant for his grace, I speak :—
May Aditi's Royal Son
Heed this humble worship done,
May he who in mercy reigns
Loose the fettered captive's chains !

14

Loose the fetters from above,
Mid and lower chains remove ;
Free from sins, in law abiding,
May we heed thy holy guiding ;
Stand, Aditis' Son, before us,
To Aditi yet restore us !

Rig. Veda, I. 24.

IV

Varuna, God of Mercy

1

Nations laud his works of wonder
Earth and sky who parts asunder,
Heaven's blue vault who holds on high,
Lights the star-lamps in the sky,
And the ocean-girdled land
Shapeth with a cunning hand !

2

King Varuna, throned aloft !
In my heart I question oft :—
Can a humble man unite
With the Lord of righteous might ;—
Can a mortal win thy grace
View thy mercy-beaming face ?

3

Unto seer and sage I turn,
Question oft that I may learn :—
What dark sin pollutes my heart,
What sweet balm will heal the smart ;—
Sages tell :—Varuna's wrath
Flings a shadow on my path !

4

Teach me, Lord, what crime unknown
 Hath its shadow on me thrown ;
 Wherefore in thy anger slay
 Worshipper who sings thy lay ?
 Nay, from sin and passion free,
 Teach me, Lord, to turn to thee !

5

Bid me expiate and shun
 Follies by my fathers done ;
 Make me fetterless and freed
 From my own unholy deed ;
 Chained like beast or trembling thief,
 From thee, Lord, I seek relief !

6

Pride and passion oft betray,
 Dice and drinking lead astray ;
 Not our will but thoughtlessness
 Leads to danger and distress,
 Elders oft the young will lead
 Even our dreams will passions breed !

7

Let me, then, from passions free,
 As thy bond-slave come to thee ;
 Thou canst grant unto the lowly
 Gift of grace and wisdom holy ;
 Thou canst lead the wise and great
 To the blest and happy state !

8

May this humble worship done,
 Lord Varuna, reach thy throne ;
 May this simple lay of love,
 King of skies, thy spirit move ;
 In our rest, and in our labour,
 Tend us still with constant favour !

V

Savitri, the Sun-God

"Sûrya and Savitri are the most common names of the sun in the Rig Veda, the former word answering to the Greek Helios, the Latin Sol, and the Iranian Khorshed. Commentators draw a distinction between Savitri, the rising or the unrisen sun and Sûrya, the bright sun of the day."—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. p. 84.

I

Bright Savitri wakes my song,
Morning lays to him belong ;—
For he brings to sons of men
Corn and kine and wealth of grain ;—
May he send his blessings fair,
Gifts and favours rich and rare !

2

Shining One ! To Gods in heaven
Life immortal thou hast given,—
Unto men upon the earth
Granted mortals' humbler birth,—
Ray of life succeeding ray
As the day succeedeth day !

3

Spirit of the rising sun !
Deeds of darkness we have done,
And to pride and passion given
Sinned against the gods in heaven :
Make us sinless of each stain,
Pure in sight of Gods and men !

4

All-pervading Lord of Light,
Universe-embracing Might !
From thy rosy hands are given
Tints on earth and lights in heaven ;
Fixed thy law, thy purpose sure,
And thy mighty works endure !

5

On each lofty hill and glade
 Home for Bright Ones thou hast made,
 In the green and fertile vale
 Mortals by thy mandate dwell,
 Gods and men thy power attest,
 Universe obeys thy hest !

6

Rich libations thrice we pour
 For thy favours' endless store ;
 Mighty Indra, Earth and Sky,
 Sindhu's streams that seaward hie,
 Sons of Aditi the blest,
 Grant us shelter, peace, and rest !

• *Rig. Veda*, IV. 54.

 VI

Ushas, the Dawn-Goddess

" There is no lovelier conception in the Rig Veda than that of the Dawn. There are no hymns in the Veda more truly poetical than those dedicated to her, and nothing more charming is to be found in the lyrical poetry of any ancient nation. . . . The Dawn was known by various names, and most of these names, and the legends connected with them, were brought by the Hindus from their original abode, since we find phonetical equivalents of these names, and a repetition of some of the legends too, in Greek mythology. Ushas is the Eos of the Greeks and the Aurora of the Latins. Arjunâ according to philologists, is the Greek Argynoris, Brisayâ is Briseis and Dahanâ is Daphne. Saramâ is phonetically equivalent to the Greek Helena. Saranyu, the mother of Yama and of the Asvins, is the Greek Erinyes, and Ahanâ is the renowned goddess Athena."

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. p. 91.

I

Ushas! Daughter of the sky,
Hold thy ruddy lights on high ;
Bring us food with dawning day,
Riches with thy radiant ray ;
White-robed nymph of morning sky,
Bring us light, let shadows fly !

2

Rich in cattle, rich in steed,
With thy gifts to mortals speed ;
Joyous nations hail thy name,
For thy favours chant thy fame ;
Waken sounds of life and joy,
Grant us bliss without alloy !

3

Our fathers hailed thy crimson light,
As we hail thee, Goddess bright ;
Ride thy sky-borne chariot brave
Like a ship on ocean wave ;
Bring upon thy radiant car,
Light and lustre from afar !

4

Men of wisdom raise their song,
Morning hymns to thee belong ;
Ancient Kanwa lifts his lay
To thy red resplendent ray,—
Kanwa wise in prophet's lore
Blesses those who feed the poor !

5

Come like house-wife gentle-hearted,
Tending us for night's departed,
Rousing with thy radiant ray,
Sending us to work of day ;—
Men to various tasks repair,
Birds with wild notes fill the air !

6

To the strong their work you send,
To the weak your favours lend,
Be a house-wife unto all,
Waking nature hears your call ;—
Men to various tasks repair,
Birds with wild notes fill the air !

7

Lo, she comes in crimson car,
Scattering splendour from afar ;
From the realms beyond the sun
In her chariot comes the Dawn ;
Ushas in her loveliness
Comes to rouse us and to bless !

8

Mortals in devotion bend,
Hymns and songs of joy ascend ;
Ushas in her radiant beauty
Comes to wake us to our duty ;
Brings us blessings in her car,
Drives all evil things afar !

9

White-robed daughter of the sky,
Hold thy ruddy light on high,
Day by day with dawning light
Bring us blessings ever bright,
Bring us blessings in thy car,
Drive the shades of night afar !

10

Golden nymph of grace divine,
Gift of life and light is thine,
Chase the shadows of the night,
Dawn in radiance red and bright,
Bring us blessings in thy car,
Last unto our lay from far !

11

Win the vigour of the strong,
Manhood which to us belong ;
Hark the lays to thee ascending
From our priests by altars bending ;
Grant, our rites from harm be free,
And our hearts may turn to thee !

12

Come with dwellers of the sky,
Swift to our libations hie ;
Grant us kine and warlike steed,
And our rites with blessings speed ;
Grant us food and warrior's name,
Manhood's strength and soldier's fame !

13

Maiden of the morning sky,
Fling thy radiance far and nigh ;
Bear us riches in thy arm,
Shield us from each earthly harm ;
Speed our crops and corn and grain,
Every gift which men attain !

14

Damsel of the dawning light,
Fathers hailed thy radiance bright,
Raised their voices in thy praise
Sung thy bounty in their lays ;
We too chant thy deathless song,
And the ancient rites prolong !

15

Ope the portals of the sky,
Light comes in, let shadows fly ;
Grant us happy homes and bright,
Free from discord, free from spite,
Milch-kine with their copious yield,
Wealth of crops from grateful field !

16

Bring us, nymph of loveliness,
 Food to comfort and to bless,
 Wealth and cattle rich and rare,
 Joy and blessings fresh and fair ;
 Ushas ! World-pervading Glory,
 Mortals chant thy wonders story !

Rig Veda, I. 48.

VII

Agni, God of Fire

"Agni is God of Fire ; the Ignis of the Latins, the Oghi of the Sclavonians."—Muir's *Sanscrit Texts*.

"All the names of the Fire and the Fire-gods were carried away by the Western Aryans ; and we have Prometheus answering to Pramantha, Phoronus to Bharanyu, and the Latin Vulcanus to the Sanscrit Ulka,"—Cox's *Mythology of Aryan Nations*.

The hymn translated below is one of peculiar interest, because it is said to have been composed by a pious lady, Viswavara.

I

Lighted Agni flames forth high,
 Flings a radiance on the sky,
 And his lustre red and bright
 Mingles with the morning light ;
 Facing east, with gifts and lays
 Viswavara sings his praise !

2

First Immortal of the skies,
 Minister of our sacrifice,
 Unto him thy gifts prolong
 Who uplifts thy sacred song,
 Unto him thy blessings come
 On whose altar is thy home !

3

Radiant on the altar shine,
Strength and lustre bright be thine ;
Spread our riches with thy flame,
Quell our foemens' power and fame,
Bless our dwellings from above,
Men and woman link in love !

4

Radiant on the altar shine,
Strength and lustre bright be thine ;
Viswavara humbly bending
Chants thy glories never ending ;
Form of splendour bright is thine,
On her altar ever shine !

5

Pious hands awake thy flame,
Pious lips repeat thy name ;
Bear unto our sacrifice
Bright Immortals from the skies,
Bear unto the Gods in heaven
Sacred offerings to thee given !

6

Pious lips the chant uplift,
Pious hands provide the gift,
Priest of Gods, Immortal bright,
Thine is morning's sacred rite,
Messenger of Gods in heaven,
Take these offerings humbly given !

Rig Veda, V. 28.

VIII

Kshetra-pati, God of Agriculture

"There are numerous direct allusions in the Rig Veda to agriculture, but the most remarkable among them is a hymn which is dedicated to the supposed God of Agriculture, the Lord of the Field."—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, Vol. I. p. 35.

I

Kshetra-pati, Tiller's God,
Master of the grateful sod,
We will till the fruitful field,
With Him win its copious yield ;
Strong our bullocks and our steeds,
He provides the tiller's needs !

2

Copious milk our cows supply,
Copious showers the helping sky,
Kshetra-pati sends his rain
To the tillers of the plain ;
Lo! Our fields are broad and spacious
Be the God of tillage gracious !

3

May our crops in sweetness grow,
And in sweetness waters flow,
Sweetly blow the perfumed air,
And the skies be bright and fair ;
Thee we follow, Lord of might,
Be our tillage free from blight !

4

Gladly works the merry swain,
Glad the patient bullocks strain,
Merry o'er the yielding soil
Ploughshare marks the tiller's toil ;
Fasten then the traces strong,
Ply the goad and move along !

5

Suna, Sira,—Plough and Ploughshare,—
Listen to the peasants' prayer ;
Milk of rain from breast of heaven
Unto thirsty earth be given ;
Store of waters feed the soil
And reward the peasant's toil !

6

Furrow, of the ploughshare born,—
Sita, bearing golden corn,—
Thee the toiling tillers praise,
Listen to their grateful lays ;
Be our meadows fed with grain,
Be our cornfields rich in grain !

7

Indra takes her by the hand,
Pushan leads her o'er the land,
From the sky obedient crops
Ah her bidding feed the crops ;
Comes the harvest year by year,
Sita comes to help and cheer !

8

Glad the ploughshare marks the plain,
Merrily toil the beasts and men,
And Parjanya, bounteous God,
Sends his showers to feed the sod ;
To the Plough and Ploughshare sing,
Crops and fruitage they will bring !

Rig Veda, IV 57.

IX

Pushan, God of Pasture

"Pushan is the sun as viewed by shepherds in their wanderings in quest of fresh pasture-lands. He travels in a chariot yoked with goats, guides men and cattle in their travels and migrations, and knows and protects the flocks. The hymns to Pushan, therefore often breathe a simplicity which is truly pastoral."

—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. pp. 84, 85.

I

Pushan, God of golden day,
Shorten thou the shepherd's way,
Vanquish every foe and stranger,
Free our path from every danger ;
Cloud-born Pushan, ever more,
Lead us as you led before !

2

Smite the wild wolf, fierce and vile,
Lurking in the dark defile,
Smite the robber and the thief,
Stealing forth to take our life ;
Cloud-born Pushan, ever more,
Lead us as you led before !

3

Chase him, Pushan, in thy wrath,
Who infests the lonely path,
Robber with his ruthless heart,
Slayer with his secret dart ;
Child of clouds, for ever more,
Lead us as you led before !

4

Trample with thy heavy tread,
On the darksome man of dread,
On the low and lying knave,
Smooth-tongued double-dealing slave ;
Child of clouds, for ever more,
Lead us as you led before !

5

Thou dost pathless forests know,
Thou canst quell the secret foe,
Thou didst lead our fathers right,
Wonder-worker orb of light ;
Grant from thy unfailing store
Wealth and blessings evermore !

6

Thou hast treasures manifold,
Glittering weapons, arms of gold ;
Foremost of the sons of Light,
Shepherd's God and Leader bright ;
Grant from thy unfailing store
Wealth and blessings ever more !

7

Lead us through the dark defile
Past pursuers dread and vile,
Lead us over pleasant ways
Sheltered by thy saving grace,
Lead us o'er this trackless shore,
And we follow ever more !

8

Where the grass is rich and green,
And the pasture's beauteous seen,
And the meadow's soft and sweet,
Lead us, safe from scorching heat,
Blessings on thy servants pour,
And we follow ever more !

9

Fill our hearts with hope and courage,
Fill our homes with food and forage,
Save us from a cruel fate
Feed us and invigorate ;
We are suppliants at thy door,
And we follow evermore !

10

Heart and voice we lift in praise,
 Chant our hymns and pious lays,
 From the Bright One, good and gracious,
 Ask for food and pasture spaceous ;
 Shepherds' God ! Befriend the poor,
 And we follow evermore !

Rig Veda, I. 24.

— — —

X

A Battle of Hymn

"Sudâs was an Aryan king and conqueror, and we are frequently told that various Aryan tribes and kings combined against him, and he was victorious over them all. The allusions to these internecine wars among Aryan races, and to the particular tribes who fought against Sudâs, are historically among the most important passages in the Rig Veda. . . . The poet Tritsu or Vasishtha, who sang these deeds of Sudâs's glory, was not unrewarded for his immortal verse. For in verses 22 and 23 (Hymn VII. 18) he acknowledges with gratitude that the valiant Sudâs rewarded him with two hundred cows and two chariots and four horses with gold trappings."

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. 55.

I

Varuna, Indra, Gods of battle !
 Foesmen came for spoil and cattle,
 Battle axes in their hand,
 Eastward came the armed band ;—
 By your grace Sudas arose,
 Smote the dark and Aryan foes !

2

Gathered nations lifted high
 Banners floating in the sky,
 Warriors turned their anxious gaze
 From the earth to sky's dark haze ;—
 None but you, our help and stay,
 Saved Sudas on that dark day !

3

To the dazed, bewildered eye
Broad earth mingled with the sky,
And the deafening shout arose
From our men and circling foes ;—
You then heard our priestly call,
Helped Sudas to conquer all !

4

Banded nations ye have quelled,
Bheda in the battle felled,
Ye were king Sudas's stay,
Saved him in the dubious fray ; —
For ye heard our holy lay,
Tritsus' service won the day !

5

Wily was the foeman's heart,
And resistless was his dart ;
Ye are Lords of earth and heaven,
To our king your aid was given ; —
For ye heard our holy lay
Tritsus' prayers won the day !

6

Foemen called on you in vain,
For ye hear not impious men ;
Foemen longed in vain for lands,
Impious hearts make feeble hands ;
Ten great kings their warriors brought, —
You beside our monarch fought !

7

Ten great kings who knew no rite
Vainly did their troops unite,
And their useless weapons bring,
For they conquered not our king ;
Fruitful was our warriors' boast,
And ye helped our conquering host !

8

With their long and braided hair
 White-robed Tritsu priests appear,
 And with hymn and holy song
 Sacrificial rites prolong ;
 Gods have heard ! Against the ten,
 They have helped our king and men !

9

Indra rends the cloud's dark folds,
 King Varuna law upholds,
 To their glory, in their praise
 Tritsus chant their pious lays ;
 Grant us, Lords, your sweet protection,
 Blessings rich and benediction !

10

King Varuna, Indra strong,
 Listen to the Tritsus' song ;
 Aryaman and Mitra bright,
 Grant us shelter, Songs of Light ;
 Fair Aditi, primal ray,
 Bright Savitri, hear this lay !

Rig Veda, VII. 83.

XI

The All-Creator

"In course of time, the priests boldly grappled with the deeper mysteries of nature ; they speculated about creation and the future world ; and they resolved the nature-gods into the Supreme Deity."

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. I. p. 94.

I

Our Father at creation's birth
 Made the sky and vasty earth,
 When commingled earth and sky
 In a watery form did lie ;
 He made fast and firm the land,
 Stretched the sky-vault by His hand !

2

All-Creator ! His creation
 Is each being in each station ;
 All-disposer ! High in grace,
 Higher than the stars his place ;
 All-sustainer ! Worship done
 By the sages reach the One !

3

He the Father,—made us all,
 He the Ruler,—hears our call,
 He the Feeder,—feeds each nation,
 Every creature in its station ;
Names of many Gods He bears,
He is One,—we seek by prayers !

4

Him they offered rites of old,
 Rishis holy, prophets bold ;
 Him they praised in sacred song,
 Worshippers, a pious throng ;
 Him they call from diverse places
 Who hath shaped all things and races !

5

Ere was born the heaven or earth,
 Gods or Titans sprang to birth,
 What was it,—primeval, lone,—
 Germ that in the waters shone ?
 Who at dim creation's morn
 Placed the Germ whence Gods were born ?

6

Unborn gods commingled lived
 In the Germ the floods received,
 In the navel of the *One*
 Lived the Germ, primeval, lone ;
 From the Uncreate have sprung
 Creatures that to Him belong !

7

Him ye do not comprehend,—
 Nature's Cause, Creation's End ;
 Him ye see not, wrapped in gloom,—
 Who is Life and final Doom ;
 Priests and chanters of the lay
 Listless wander from the way !

Rig Veda, X. 82.



XII

The Golden Child

"One more hymn we will quote here, a remarkable hymn, showing again how the later Rishis soared beyond the conception of the nature-gods to the sublime idea of One Deity."

—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, Vol. I. p. 26

I

To what God in earth or air
 Shall we offer gift and prayer ?
 Him,—the Golden Child,—the one,
 Lord of all since nature's dawn ;
 Ocean-compassed earth He spread,
 Flung the sky-vault overhead !

2

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer?
Him who lit life's primal ray,
And whom heavenly hosts obey,
Him whose darkening shade is Death,
And whose light—Immortal Breath !

3

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer?
Him, — the Ruler-king above
Of all things that live and move,
Him who formed the beast and man
When creation's life began !

4

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer?
Him whose mighty hand hath made
Snowy mountains, ocean's bed,
Whose vast arms— the spreading sky,
Far-extending, flaming high !

5

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer?
Him who fixed the earth and sky,
Starry heavens suspended high,
And the blue-vault shaped and bent,
Measured out the firmament !

6

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer?
Him whom earth and sounding sky
Render worship pure and high,
And the sun each circling hour
Borrows radiance from His power !

7

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer ?
Him, the Life of gods, the ONE,
Rising at creation's dawn,
When deep waters held in gloom
Unborn Agni in their womb !

8

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer ?
Him, the God of Gods,—the ONE,—
Who o'er primal waters shone,
When the deep brought forth in gloom
Nascent Agni from their womb.

9

To what God in earth or air
Shall we offer gift and prayer ?
Him, the vasty earth who made,
Nature's changeless laws who laid,
Rolled the great and lucid floods,
World's creator, God of Gods !

10

Lord of creatures ! Thou dost know
Things created here below ;
Thou above canst comprehend
Vast creation's cause and end ;
Grant us blessing and protection,
Grant us wealth and benediction !

Rig Veda, X 12

II

Passages from the Upanishads

"From every sentence, deep, original, and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindred spirits. . . . In the whole world there is no study except that of the originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Omekhat*. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death." *Schopenhauer*.

I

The Universal Soul

"The monotheism of the Upanishads, which has been the monotheism of the Hindu religion ever since, recognises God as the Universal Being; all things else have emanated from Him, are a part of Him, and will mingle with Him"

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. p. 191.

I

All this universe is BRAHMA,—
 All that live and move and die,—
 Born in Him, in Him subsisting,
 Ending in that Being High.
 And the mortal ever reapeth
 As he sows upon this earth,
 As he lives in sin or virtue
 So he takes his future birth !

2

He is Life and highest Knowledge,
 He is Truth and holy Light,
 And His soul the world pervadeth
 But like ether 'scapes our sight.
 From Him every deed and action,
 Every wish and impulse spring,
 Calm and conscious, never speaking,
 He embraceth everything !

3

He—the self within my bosom,
 Impulse of the heart and brain,
 Smaller than the smallest substance,
 Kernel of the smallest grain.
 He—the self within my bosom,
 Greater than the earth and sky,
 Vaster than the lands and oceans,
 Higher than the heaven on high !

4

From Him every deed and action,
 Every wish and impulse spring,
 Calm and conscious, never speaking,
 He embraceth everything.
 He the self within my bosom,
 He the universal goal,—
 When I leave this world of mortals
 Unto Him will wing my soul !

Chhandogya Upanishad, III 14

II

The Legend of Satyakama

I

Satyakama, truth-beloving,
 Whom the poor Jabala bore,
 Felt a longing love for knowledge,
 Hidden truth and highest lore.
 And he came unto his mother,
 Asked her of his father's name,—
 "Mother, I would be a student,
 Tell me from what line I came."

2

Poor Jabala, erring woman,
 Spake in shame but spake the truth,—
 "Sinfully I lived and wandered,
 And I bore thee in my youth.
 And I know not of thy father,
 Know not of what line thou art,
 Take thy surname from thy mother,
 Offspring of her erring heart."

3

Humbled by the sad recital
 To Gautama went the youth,—
 “ I would be a student, Father,
 For I wish to know the truth.”
 Gautama with kindly greetings
 Asked the student whence he came,—
 “ Tell me of what line thou comest,
 Tell me what may be thy name.”

4

Satyakama, truth-beloving,
 Spake in shame but spake the truth,—
 “ Sorrowfully my mother wandered,
 And she bore me in her youth ;
 Scarce I know who be my father,
 Scarcely, of what line I came,
 Poor Jabala is my mother,
 And Jabala be my name.”

5

“ Held, my friend and faithful student,”—
 Spake the sage unto the youth,
 “ By thy worth thou art a Brahman
 For thou dardest speak the truth.
 Go and fetch the sacred fuel,
 I will teach thee lessons high,
 Sacred learning of our fathers,
 For thy accents shaped no lie !

6

Satyakama brought the fuel,
 Was a student young and brave,
 And he kept his teacher's cattle,
 Served his teacher as his slave.
 And in field and pathless jungle
 Still he pondered as he went,
 Nature to his eager question
 Helping light and guidance lent.

7

From the bull so strong and sturdy
 Of the herd he tended well,
 From the red and flaming faggot
 Lighted when the evening fell,
 From the gay and bright flamingo
 As it sailed across the sky,
 From the diver-bird so beauteous
 Clad in plumes of rainbow dye,

8

From the thoughts that rose within him
 When he sat without a friend,
 When the evening fire he lighted
 And the cattle he had penned,
 From each high and humble object
 Came its meaning to the youth,
 From the secret lamp of Nature
 Flashed on him the light of Truth !

9

And he came to sage Gautama
 With a bright and beaming face,—
 Sacred truth and holy wisdom
 Brings its gladness and its grace.
 "Lo ! a light is on thy forehead,
 Dost thou then of BRAHMA know ?
 Only those who know the True One
 With such inward gladness glow !"

10

"Father, I have sought to fathom,"—
 Softly answered thus the youth,—
 "From the objects of creation,
 Not from man, the highest truth.
 Boundless space and vault of azure,
 Sky and earth and ocean broad,
 Sun and moon and soul immortal,—
 All is BRAHMA, all is GOD !"

. *Abridged from the Chhandogya Upanishad, IV.*

III

The Legend of Gargi

I

Janak, bold and bounteous monarch,
 Erst in broad Videha reigned,
Held his rites in regal splendour
 And an ample feast ordained.
Brahmans from the Kuru kingdom
 And from fair Panchala came,
For they knew of Janak's bounty
 And they heard of Janak's fame.

2

Who of these assembled Brahmans,
 To the sacrifice who came,
Was the deepest versed in Vedas,
 Worthiest of a Brahman's name ?
Thus a question stirred the bosom
 Of the monarch proud and bold,
And he penned a thousand milch kine,
 On each horn was hung some gold.

3

"Saintly teachers, learned Brahmans,
 Welcome to my royal feast,
Let him win a thousand milch kine
 Who is wisest and the best,
Who is deepest in his learning,
 Let him stand and win the gold !"
Thus to teachers of the Vedas
 Spake the monarch calm and bold.

4

Brahmans heard the royal mandate,
 Durst not stand and win the prize,—
 Where so many wise men gathered
 Who could claim to be most wise ?
 Up stood learned Yajna-valkya,—
 Janak's proud preceptor he,—
 And the priest spake to his pupil,
 "Drive the cattle home for me !"

5

Wrathful were the other Brahmans,—
 Asvala, invoking priest,
 Arta-bhaga, versed in Vedas,
 Lahya-yani, lord of feast,
 Chakra-yana, Kaushi-taki,
 Udda-laka stood before,
 And with questions deep contested
 Yajna-valkya's Vedic lore !

6

Yajna-valkya, proud and peerless,
 Answered them with priestly pride,
 As a towering moveless mountain
 Beateth back the ocean's tide.
 Then stood sage and saintly Gargi,
 Dark locks graced her woman's head,
 Wise was she as wisest Brahman,
 Learned as the deepest-read !

7

"As a chief of Kasi's kingdom,
 Or Videha's warlike land,
 Lifts his bow to face the battle,
 Takes his arrows in his hand,
 Even so, great Yajna-valkya,
 I will rise to challenge thee,
 Ask thee, priest, to face my questions,
 List to them and answer me !

8

" On the broad earth far extending,
 In the firmament and sky,
 In the present, past, and future,
 Ever living, ever nigh,
 In the wide space interwoven
 Like the warp and like the woof,
 What pervades, unseen, unfathomed,
 Earth below and heaven's high roof ?"

9

" Subtle question, saintly Gargi,
 Deep enquiry hast thou made,—
 But 'tis ether, viewless, shapeless,
 Which doth earth and sky pervade. "
 " Subtle answer, Yajna-valkya,
 In thy wisdom thou hast given,—
 But what is this viewless ether,
 Wherein is it interwoven ?"

10

" Deeper, Gargi, is this question,—
 Wherein is the ether woven,
 Wherein dwell the past and future
 Wherein rest the earth and heaven ?
 'Tis the uncreate IMMORTAL,
 Viewless,—fills the world so broad,
 Flameless,—burns not like the red fire,
 Moveless,—sweeps not like the flood !

11

" Without shadow, without darkness,
 He is neither air nor sky,
 Void of taste and touch and feeling
 He subsists sublime and high !
 Without hearing—hears all nature,
 Views creation—void of sight,
 Void of limbs—but ever acting,
 Void of form — but Infinite !

12

"Gargi, wouldst thou further fathom ?

He ordains the night and day,
Earth and sky confess His mandate,
Sun and moon his hests obey !
He hath shaped the seas and mountains,
Life to creatures he hath given,
Darkly-acting, dimly present,
In all Nature interwoven !

Abridged from the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, III. 1, 8.

IV

The Legend of Maitreyi

I

Unto her, his well-beloved,—
Maitreyi the pious wife,—
Spake the saintly Yajna-valkya,
When he took to forest life.
"Worldly wealth and every object
Now I leave behind, my fair,
Katyavanti takes her portion,
Thou, Maitreyi, take thy share."

2

"Worldly wealth and precious objects,"
Asked the pious-hearted wife,
"Will they lead to my salvation,
Lead me to immortal life ?"
"Nay, they lead not to salvation,
Lead not to a higher state,
But the life the rich man liveth
Shall be, dear-loved wife, thy fate."

3

“ But the life the rich man liveth
 Unto me, my lord, were vain,
 Teach me that which works salvation,
 Life immortal I would gain. ”
 “ Ever dear, my sweet Maitreyi,
 Dearer now art thou to me,
 And the wealth that works salvation,
 I will leave that wealth to thee !

4

“ Love of man and faithful woman,
 Ties that friends with friends combine,
 Love of parents and of children,
 Tendence of our flocks and kine,
 Love of every outward object
 Of our inner love is part,—
 Love thy self, and all creation
 Claims a portion of thy heart !

5

“ Sound the drum, a music issues,
 Can you grasp the sound so bold ?
 Blow the conch at festive season,
 Can you that soft utterance hold ?
 Strike the harp-string deep-resounding,
 Can you touch its voice profound ?
 Stop the drum, the conch, the harp string,
 And you stop the uttered sound !

6

“ Thus through self within your bosom
 Outer nature you control,
 For yourself is kin to nature,
 Portion of the Mighty Soul.
 From the fire a deep cloud issues,
 Various-shaped it floats on high,
 From the Mighty Soul thus issue
 Forms that people earth and sky !

7

" He breathed forth the vast creation,
 Vedas, Sastras, all are His,
 Sense and sight and self within us,
 Worlds and mountains and the seas.
 He is like the tintless crystal,
 Shapeless, viewless, dark and dim,
 Spring from Him all shapes in nature,
 All the worlds will merge in Him !"

8

" But my love !" exclaimed Maitreyi,
 " Pardon if I somewhat fail,—
 Weak is woman's sense and reason, .
 And obscure the truth you tell.
 " Not so," Yajna-valkya answered,
 " Know a part, you grasp the whole,
 Clear as is the sun at midday
 Is the Universal Soul !

9

" All the outer worlds pervading,
 And the orbs that ceaseless roll,
 All the cosmic force directing,
 Is—the Universal Soul.
 All unseen, but manifested
 In the sky and earth so broad,
 All-surveying, ever present,—
 He is BRAHMA, He is GOD !"

Abridged from Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, IV. 5.

V

The Legend of Balaki

I

Bold Balaki was a Brahman
Proud of learning and of lore,
Versed in Veda and in Sastra,
Known in many a distant shore,
In the realm of Usinara
And in Matsya he had been,
Kuruland and broad Panchala,
Kasi and Videha seen.

2

Royal sage Ajata-satru
Ruled in Kasi rich in fame,
Unto him the learned Brahman
As a guest and stranger came.
"Blessed be thy rule, O monarch,
And thy empire rich and fair,
I will speak to thee of BRAHMA,
Ruler of the earth and air!"

3

"Welcome, welcome, learned Brahman,
Handsome be thy learning's mead,
For thy holy speech I offer
Thousand kine of finest breed.
All the priests and sages hasten
To Videha's mightier king,
Come thou to the court of Kasi
And a Brahman's blessings bring!"

4

"Listen, then, O pious monarch,
Mark the sun so fair and bright,
Worship thou the Soul of Radiance
Dwelling in that orb of light !"
"Higher message, priest Balaki,
Deeper lesson must thou state,
For the sun is great and glorious,
But is not the Uncreate !"

5

"Mark the moon, O mighty monarch,
Sailing o'er the silent sky,
Worship thou the Soul of Beauty
Dwelling there serene and high !"
"Higher message, priest Balaki,
Deeper lesson must thou state,
For the moon is bright and beauteous,
But is not the Uncreate !"

6

"Mark, O king, the forked lightning
Leaping through the lurid sky,
Worship thou the Soul of Terror
Flashing there sublime and high !"
"Higher message, priest Balaki,
Deeper lesson must thou state,
For the lightning is terrific,
But is not the Uncreate !"

7

"List, O king, in voice of thunder
Mandate high and law profound,
Worship thou the Soul of Grandeur
Dwelling in that lofty sound !"
"Higher message, priest Balaki,
Deeper lesson thou must state,
Mighty is the peal of thunder,
But is not the Uncreate !"

8

Laboured still the learned Brahman
 Nature's secrets to explain,
 Quoted from each holy Sastra,
 Argued long, but argued vain,
 To his reasons, to his learning,
 Simply this the monarch said :
 Glorious is this wide creation,—
 Uncreate the hand that made !

9

Scroll and scripture and tradition,
 Proud Balaki quoted oft,
 Spoke of fire and viewless ether,
 Seas below and skies aloft,
 Spoke of shadow and reflection,
 Word and echo, voice and sound,
 Argued still of dream and slumber,
 But solution none he found !

10

Silent was the boastful Brahman,
 Bent his humbled head in shame,
 Sad at heart in pride of wisdom
 To a wiser king he came.
 " Thus far,"—spake the monarch gently,—
 " Thus far doth your knowledge go ?"
 " Thus far,"—spake the Brahman humbly,—
 " Teach me what you further know !"

11

With the fuel, as a student,
 Meekly priest Balaki came,
 Seeking knowledge from the monarch
 Great in wisdom as in fame.
 " He, the sun and moon who lighted,
 Spread the earth and sky so great,
 Hung the star-lamps in the azure,—
 He alone is Uncreate !"

Abridged from the Kaushi-taki Upanishad.

VI

Death's Secret

I

Nachi-ketas, young and living,
Sent to regions of the dead,
Questioned thus the mighty Yama,—
Death's deep secret he would read.—
“There is doubt, O sable monarch,
When an earthly mortal dies,
Is that death his final ending,
Doth he live again in skies?”

2

Answered him the sable monarch,—
Yama, ruler of the dead,—
“Mortals often ask that question,
Gods my secret may not read.
Not revealed to Gods or mortals
Is the mystery of death,
Ask for other boon and blessing,
Ask of creatures drawing breath.

3

“Ask for sons and happy grandsons,
Who shall live a hundred years,
Gold and garments, cars and horses,
Life exempt from ills and fears.
Lord of broad and fertile acres,
Rich in fruitage, corn and wine,
Many autumns, as thou wilt,
Life of happiness be thine !

4

“ Higher hopes and aspirations
 If thy noble heart doth frame,
Seek for prowess and for glory,
 And a hero's deathless fame.
Be a king of spacious kingdoms,
 Be a lord upon the earth,
Happy in thy life's fruition
 Be the foremost in thy worth !

5

“ Or if softer pleasures tempt thee,
 Sweeter joys of earth be thine,
Lute and lyre and heavenly music,
 Damsels fair and sparkling wine.
Be attended by these maidens, —
 Such as these men do not see, —
Ask for every boon and favour,
 Leave my secret unto me !

6

“ These are,” Nachi-ketas answered,
 “ Pleasures that will pass away,
What will please us in the present
 Fade to-morrow and decay.
Keep thy dance and heavenly music,
 Maidens young and fresh as May,
Teach me thy great secret only,
 Secret of the after-day !”

7

“To the pious,” Yama answered,
 “ Is all mystery revealed,
To the man of contemplation
 Life and Death their secret yield.
And he sees the Soul Immortal
 Darkly hid from mortal eyes,
Mutely feels the throbbing presence
 Of the Lord of earth and skies !

EPICS AND LAYS OF ANCIENT INDIA

8

And the man who knows this secret
Earthly carvings can control,
Passes from his earthly prison,
Mingles with the Mighty Soul.
Nach-ketas, this my secret,—
BRAHMA is the Mighty Breath,
BRAHMA'S house is ever open,
Life existeth after death ! ”

Abridged from the Katha Upanished, I. 12.



Passages from Buddhist Literature

"The *Three Pitakas* were composed, settled, and arranged in India during the hundred or two hundred years after the death of Gautama Buddha, just as the four Christian Gospels were composed and settled within a century or two after the death of Jesus. . . . The Three Pitakas are known as the Sutta Pitaka, the Vinaya Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka. The works comprised in the Sutta Pitaka profess to record the sayings and doings of Gautama Buddha himself. . . . The Vinaya Pitaka contains very minute rules, often on the most trivial subjects, for the conduct of monks and nuns. . . . And lastly, the Abhidhamma Pitaka contains disquisitions on various subjects, on the conditions of life in different worlds, on personal qualities, on the elements, on the causes of existence, &c."

--*Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. pp. 315, 316.

I

Buddha's Birth

1

Sage Asita saw a vision, —
When our Master took his birth, —
Saw the Bright Gods all assembled,
Wafting blessings to the earth.
“Wherefore are the Bright Gods wafting
Salutations from the sky,
Flinging on the earth a radiance
From their concourse great and high?”
“’Tis because the Lord and Master,
For the weary and the worn,
In the kingdom of the Sakyas
At Lumbini’s grove is born!”

2

Sage Asita in his wisdom
Spake to Sakya’s saintly king, —
“Unto thee a babe is given,
Gods to him their homage bring!”
And he saw the child of lustre,
Gold-like, wrought by cunning hand,
Beaming with an inward glory,
Jewel of the happy land.
“He is born our Lord and Master,”
So the sage Asita said,
“He shall be the Great Awakened,
And the rule of love shall spread.”

3

And the blind received their vision,
So, the bright babe they might see,
And the deaf man heard a music,
Strains of peace and piety!
Hymns of praise the speechless uttered
To the Lord and Master come,
Lame and crooked, halt and stricken,
Ran rejoicing to their home!

Chains and shackles fell asunder
 In the prisons of the earth,
 Skies with brighter light and lustre
 Hailed the child's auspicious birth !

From the Nalaka Sutta & Birth Stories.

II

Buddha's Death

THUS in many lands they wandered,
 Buddha and his faithful friend,
 Teaching truth to many nations,
 Till his life approached its end.
 And they say, along the pathway,
 As the saintly Master went,
 Fruit trees blossomed out of season
 And a lovely fragrance lent.
 And that flowers and sandal-powder
 Gently fell on him from high,
 And that strains of heavenly music
 Sounded from the sun-lit sky !

2

But the saintly Master whispered
 To his friend beloved and blest,
 " 'Tis not thus, O friend Ananda,
 That the Buddha's honoured best,
 Not by flowers or sandal-powder,
 Not by music's heavenly strain,
 Is the soul's true worship rendered,
 Useless are these things and vain.
*But the brother and the sister,
 Man devout and woman holy, —
 Pure in life, in duty faithful, —
 They perform the worship truly !*"

3

Night came on, and saintly Buddha
 Slept in suffering, sick and wan,
 When a Brahman, seeking wisdom,
 Came to see the holy man.
 Anxiously Ananda stopped him,
 But spake Buddha, though in pain,
 "He who comes to seek for wisdom
 Shall not come to me in vain."
 And he to the pious stranger
 Told the truth in language plain,
 Taught the law with dying accents,
 Stopped, and never spake again !

From the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.

III

Buddha's Precepts

"The whole of the *Dhammapāda* is a string of 423 moral precepts which for their beauty and moral worth are unsurpassed by any similar collection of precepts made in any age or country. . . . Who is not struck by the remarkable coincidence of these noble precepts with those preached five hundred years after in Palestine by the gentle and pure-souled Jesus Christ?"—*Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. i. pp. 366, 367. The precepts translated below are numbered 5, 51, 130, 197, 200, 223, 252, 260, 393 and 394 in the original text.

I

Render hate to those who hate you,
 Deeper rolls the stream of strife ;
 Render love and healing kindness,
 Hatred dies and sweet is life !

2

Pious precepts, smooth-tongued preacher,
 Never acted, wisely meant,
 Are like gay and golden blossoms
 Without fragrance, without scent !

3

Dost thou shrink from death and suffering,
Dost thou cling to life from birth ?
So doth every brother-creature,—
Harm not living things on earth !

4

Unto those who live in hatred
Thou shalt bear thee hatred-free,
Unto those who smite in anger
Changeless in thy meekness be !

5

Pious acts endure for ever,
And in heaven the actor meet,
As his loved and loving kinsmen
Home-returning kinsman greet !

6

By your Love the wrathful conquer,
By your Grace the ill pursue,
By your Charity the miser,
By your Truth the false subdue !

7

Faults of other men ye question,
Not the evil ye have done,
Neighbour's sins like chaff ye winnow,
Like a false die hide your own !

8

Not a sage and not an elder
Is the man advanced in age,
Truth and virtue, love and kindness
Make the elder and the sage !

9

Not by skins and plaited tresses,
Not by family and birth,
But by truth and righteous conduct
Is the Brahman known on earth !

IO

Wherefore then thy plaited tresses
 And thy holy robe of skin,
 What avails this outward penance
 When there's ravening within ?

IV

Asoka's Message to his People

Asoka the Great ruled India from 260 to 222 B. C., embraced the Buddhist religion, and spread it over India and far beyond the limits of India. "If a man's fame," says Kopen, "can be measured by the number of hearts who revere his memory, by the number of lips who have mentioned and still mention him with honour, Asoka is more famous than Charlemagne or Cæsar."

I

Thus spake royal Piyadasi,
 Of the Gods beloved :
 " Grace and righteous exhortation
 Have my subjects moved.
 For my pastors to the people
 Holy lessons sing,—
 And my priests to countless thousands
 Loving message bring !

2

" I have spoke to subject peoples
 Precepts I have loved,
 I have carved on rock-made pillars
 Lessons I have proved.
 Ministers of faith and duty
 Have my mandates told,—
 Spoke to near and distant nations,
 Maxims loved of old !

3

“ And along each royal pathway,
By each highway made,
Figs and mangoes I have planted
For repose and shade,
Wells I made for man and cattle,
All that breathe and move,—
But with higher toil constructed
Springs of faith and love !

4

“ Scatter then my royal riches,
Spread my bounty then,
To the monk and to the toiler,
To all living men,
To the Brahman and the Sraman,
To all sects of fame,—
Let each clan and corporation
Know Asoka's name !

5

“ And unto my royal bounty
Others add their store,
For my queens with queenly mercy
Help the helpless poor ;
And my white-robed royal children
Acts of kindness prove,—
Charity and Truth and Kindness,
Purity and Love !

6

“ Thus in ever growing current
May our bounty flow,
To the Brahman and the Sraman,
To the poor and low ;
For the humble and the lowly
Special kindness crave,—
May our mercy reach the menial,
Cheer the unchained slave !

7

"Laws severe we vainly fashion,
Codes we vainly start,
Gentle teaching, soft persuasion,
Touch the people's heart.
Hence I carve this loving edict,
Speak these maxims pure,—
Future kings will work as long as
Sun and moon endure !

8

"Since I won my father's Empire,
Since this State was mine,
Past are seven and twenty autumns
When I carve this line.
Where 'tis writ on stony pillar
In this Empire vast,—
Unto far and distant ages
May this Edict last !"

Pillar Edict, VIII.

V**Asoka's Message to Foreign Nations**

I

King and victor Piyadasi,
Of the Gods beloved,
O'er the plains of broad Kalinga
With his army moved.
Hundred thousand men were taken,
Hundred thousand died,—
Righteous sorrow wrung his bosom,
And the victor cried :

2

“Brahmans pure and Sramans holy,
Men who toil in life,
Faithful fathers, loving children,
Husband and the wife,—
These to pain and separation,
Slavery and death,
I have doomed, and swept Kalinga
With destruction’s breath !

3

“Let me seek for other tropics,
Win the spoils of faith,—
Peace and plenty, not disaster,
Life and love, not death !
Speak then to my farthest frontiers,
To each distant soil,
Warfare ends, the work of mercy
Henceforth is my toil !

4

“Syria’s monarch Antiochus,
Egypt’s Ptolemy,
Macedonian Antigonas,
Magas of Cyrene
Alexander of Epiros,—
These five kings of West
Shall receive my loving message,
Gospel true and blest !

5

“Cholas and the mighty Pandyas,
Tamba-pannis meek,
Henaraja-Vismavasis,
And the Bactrian Greek,
Nabhakas and Nabha-pantis,
Bhojas free from fear,
Andhras and the brave Pulindas
Shall my tidings hear !

6

"Messengers of Piyadasi
To these lands are sent,
Grateful kings and listening nations
To his faith have bent ;
Thus I win a brighter conquest
And a holier fame,
And a more than earthly gladness
Thrills my mortal frame !

7

"Rich and rare the golden fruitage
Of a life of faith,
Full and ample is the harvest
Gathered after death ;
Hence the monarch Piyadasi
Carves this sacred line,
That his royal sons and grandsons
May to faith incline !

8

"That the kings of earth hereafter
May all conquests shun,
Wrought by rapine and by bloodshed,
Deeds of darkness done ;
That the monarchs may hereafter
Conquer realms by faith,
Fame on earth awaits such conquest,
Glory after death !"

Rock Edict, XIII.

VI

Muktalata, Princess of Ceylon

Kshemendra is a voluminous but not a great poet, and flourished in Kashmir in the eleventh century after Christ. His versification is fluent and graceful, and he seems to have condensed all that was best in older Sanscrit literature—poetry, rhetoric, tales, and fiction—into compact readable works. Buddhist stories too did not come amiss to him, and in his *Kalpalata* he gives us 108 Buddhist tales, one of which is translated below. This work, *Kalpalata*, like most other Buddhist works, was lost in India; but Mr. Sarat Chandra Das has in course of his journeys in Thibet recovered a copy of the work with a Thibetan translation; and it has been published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

I

Like the bright moon's golden crescent,
Rising from the milky sea,
She was born with heavenly beauty
In Simhala bright and free.

2

On her birth a shower of bright pearls
From the skies auspicious fell,
Hence they named her Muktalata,
Princess of Simhala's isle.

3

And she grew in grace and goodness,
Lanka's royal house to bless,
And as worth brings sweet contentment,
So her years brought loveliness.

4

Merchants from the famed Sravasti,
Happily it so befell,
Crossed the sea, to fair Simhala
Came their merchandise to sell,

5

And they sung the sacred *Gatha*,
As their nightly sleep they sought,
Sung the holy lay which teaches
Precepts that our Master taught.

6

From her inner palace chambers
Mukta heard the chanted lay,
Asked the merchants to her presence,
And its import bade them say.

7

And they told the raptured maiden,
"Princess ! 'tis the Buddha's word,
He is bounteous to all creatures,
Of all creatures he is Lord !"

8

And the pious-hearted princess
Heard the holy Buddha's name,
And a brightness flushed her forehead,
And a tremor shook her frame !

9

Eagerly the pea-fowl listens
To the cloud presaging rain,
Eagerly the princess listened,—
Who this Lord ?—she asked again.

10

To the princess, pious-hearted,
By her questions gratified,
Spake the merchants of the Buddha,
Lord of all creation wide.

11

Till awoke within her bosom
Memories of her previous birth,
And to them she gave a letter
• For the Buddha, Lord of earth.

12

And the traders crossed the ocean,
Reached their own, their native land,
Gave the message to the Buhdha,
Placed the letter in his hand.

13

And our Master, all fore-knowing,—
Knowing all the princess wrote,—
Moved by tenderness and mercy,
Thus perused the maiden's note :

14

“Thy remembrance brings salvation,
Cures the longings of this world,
And imparting righteous knowledge
Is like nectar to me, Lord !”

15

Thus our saintly Lord and Master
Briefly read the pious scroll,
And a gentle smile betokened
All the workings of his soul.

16

And with skill and knowledge wondrous,
Which the painters never knew,
For the princess of Simhala
On a sheet his likeness drew.

17

By his mandate all the merchants
With their cargo sailed anew,
Reached Simhala, to the princess
Gave the sheet our Master drew.

18

And the people viewed he painting
Placed upon a golden shelf,
And with honour contemplating
Seemed to see the Lord himself !

19

Written under that sweet likeness,
 All the people, wondering truly,
 Saw the holy Three Asylums,
 Saw the Five Instructions holy ;

20

And the Noble Eightfold Pathway
 Deftly writ, with wisdom rife,
 With the Doctrine of Causation,—
 Life to death, and death to life !

21

Blazing bright in golden letters,
 On it shone the Holy Word,—
 Truth explained in beauteous language,
 Written by our blessed Lord.

22

“Sufferers from sin and sorrow,
 Leave this darksome vale of tears,
 Serpent-fanged are worldly passions,
 Trust in Him who quells all fears.”

23

And the monarch's noble daughter
 Viewed the likeness fair and holy,
 And was freed from worldly longings
 Bred of ignorance and folly.

24

Tall and fair his golden likeness,
 Broad his shoulders, mighty arms,
 Eyelids closed in contemplation,
 Stately nose and manly charms ;

25

Beaming in his native beauty,
 Ears and locks by art unaided,
 Clad in russet,—like a mountain
 By the evening's red cloud shaded ;

26

Teaching duty by his bearing,
By his bright face teaching good,
Mercy by his soft eyes teaching,—
Such the form the princess viewed !

27

Bowing, till the budding blossoms
From her ears and ringlets rained,
With them earthly joys discarding,
Truth supreme the princess gained.

28

In a moment's time achieving
Truth divine and Knowledge rare,
Lost in joy and pious wonder
Thus in gladness spake the fair :

29

“Chaser of the world's illusions,
Saintly Buddha, dwelling far,
Present by this radiant likeness,
Lovelier than the lotus-star ;

30

“I have crossed the world's illusions,
Heart's true concentration found,
Pains and passions now have left me,—
Peace, like nectar, flows around !”

31

Thus she spake, and to the Buddha
Pearls and costly jewels sent,—
For the use of holy *Sangha*
With these gifts the merchants went ;

32

O'er the sea, unto our Master,
In their ships the merchants came,—
Bowing unto him they rendered
Pearl and stone and costly gem:

33

And our Master kindly listened
To the tale the merchants told,—
Questioned by the Monk Ananda
Thus did Mukta's life unfold :

34

“ Rohika, a servant woman,
In a Sakya's house who stayed,
Hath been born as Muktalata,
By her worth a princess made !

35

“ Mahadhana, princely merchant,
In Benares lived of yore,
And his wife, a virtuous woman,
Ratnavati name she bore ;

36

“ And when died this Mahadhana,
Ratnavati, childless fair,
On a lofty holy *stupa*
Placed a necklace rich and rare ;

37

“ For this action, elevated,
She as Muktalata shone,
Born as Lanka's beauteous princess
Royal station she has won ;

38

“ Not at once, for pride of treasures
Stained her soul as merchant's wife,
Born as servant, cleansed of passion,
Next she lives her queenly life !

39

“ Deeds that are by mortals rendered,
Good or bad upon this earth,
Yield their fruits in equal measure,
Ripened in a future birth !

EPICS AND LAYS OF ANCIENT INDIA

40

“ Holy life, a fragrant creeper,
Rooted well in righteous worth,
Bears its blossoms in this wide world,
Bears its fruit in after birth ;

41

“ Evil life, a poisonous creeper,
Rooted in unrighteous deed,
Yields on earth its vain delusions,
And hereafter cruel meed !

42

“ In this lifetime ever fleeting,
Shun, ye men, all deeds unholy,
Bitter are the woes that follow,
Penitence pursueth folly ;

43

“ In the acts of grace rejoicing
Strive in faith and righteousness,
Nourished by the dew of Mercy
Virtue's fruitage comes to bless !”

From Kshemendra's Kalpalata, VII.

IV

The Bridal of Uma, by Kalidasa

“THE three centuries (500 to 800 A.D.) commencing with the time of Vikramaditya the Great may be called the ~~Augustan~~ era of Sanscrit literature, and nearly all the great works ~~which are~~ popular in India to this day belong to this period. *Kalidasa* wrote his matchless dramas and poems in Vikrama's court. *Amara Sinha*, the lexicographer, was another of the “nine gems” of this court. And *Bharavi* was *Kalidasa*'s contemporary, or lived shortly after. *Siladitya II*, a successor of *Vikramaditya*, ruled from 610 to 650 A.D. and is the reputed author of *Ratnavali*. *Dandin*, the author of *Dasakumara Charita*, was an old man when *Siladitya II*. reigned ; and *Banabhatta*, the author of *Kadamvari*, lived in his court. *Subandhu*, the author of *Vasavadatta*, also lived at the same time ; and there are reasons to believe that the *Bhattikavya* was composed by *Bhartrihari*, the author of the *Satakas*, in the same reign.

“In the next century *Yasovarman* ruled between 700 and 750 A.D., and the renowned *Bhavabhuti* composed his powerful dramas in this reign. *Bhavabhuti*, however, was the last of the galaxy of poets and literary men of Ancient India, and no great literary genius arose in India after the eighth century.”

— *Civilisation in Ancient India*, vol. I, p. 18.

Kalidasa, the first of the poets named above, is best known to European readers by his immortal drama, *Sakuntala*. His narrative and descriptive poems are also popular in India ; and among them, his *Kumara-Sambhava* is perhaps the best. Books, I, III, and V of this poem, virtually containing the entire story, have been translated in full in the following pages.

I

Uma's Birth

The poem begins with a description of the Himalaya Mountains. The birth of Uma, her youth and beauty, and her first meeting with Siva, are then narrated in this Book.

i

Himalaya mountain-monarch,
Guarding regions of the north,
Stretching east to western ocean,
Seems to span the spacious earth ;
As the cow gives milk to young ones,
So the earth to Himalay,
Yielded wealth of wood and forest,
Gem and stone of purest ray ;
And so bright the store of treasure,
Ice bedims it not, nor snow,
As the stain on moon's bright crescent
Darkens not its silver glow !
Rocks that glow like ruddy evening,
Tints that with the soft clouds blend,
Tempt the nymphs to paint their glances,
Teach them keener darts to send ;
Peaks that rise above the rain cloud,
And in constant sunshine glow,
Tempt the anchorite and hermit
From the mist and storm below ;
Ice fields, where in vain the hunter
Seeks for bloodstains washed by snow,
Strown by pearls from slaughtered tuskers,
Teach him secret haunts to know ;
And the barks on which in crimson
Whispered thoughts of love are written,
Serve as missives for the wood-nymphs,
Oft, alas, in secret smitten !

ii

Woodland minstrels lift their voices
Rich in notes of woodland love,
Mountain breezes lend their music
Piping through the bamboo grove ;
Stately Sal-trees broke by tuskers
Yield their gum so rich and rare,
Lend their fragrance to the greenwood,
Scenting sweet the mountain air ;
Creepers, luminous in darkness,
In the lover's grottos gleam,
And like night-lamps self-illuminéd
Shed a soft and kindly beam ;
And deep-bosomed forest damsels,
Moving with a languid grace,
Though they step o'er frozen ice-fields,
Oft frequent the trysting place !
Shadows fleeing from the sunlight
Shelter in the mountain's cave,
As the timid and the helpless
Seek for refuge with the brave ;
Chowries wave their fans of silver
Gleaming like the moonbeams bright,
As to crownéd king his menials
Wave the Chamar silver-white ;
And the mists that shade the grottos,
Deepening as they onward ride,
Often screen from ardent lovers
Charms the blushing nymph would hide !
Saturate with Ganga's moisture
Breezes cool the rocky soil,
Murmur through the mountain forest,
Cheer the hunter in his toil ;
Lotus beds whence star-bright Rishis
Gather buds for holy rite,
Are by southern sun awakened
With a faint and crimson light ;
And to dominate this wide earth,
And to prosper pious rites,
Himalay was made the loftiest
Of all lofty mountain heights !

iii

Lo ! the mountain-monarch,
 To his duty true,
Wedded sweet-eyed Mena,—
 Saints her virtues knew ;
Sported in love's dalliance
 Nymph and monarch brave,
And the happy Mena
 Gladsome promise gave !
Daksha's duteous daughter,—
 Siva's former wife,—
Came as Mena's daughter,
 Took a newer life ;
Her as monarch's infant
 Queenly Mena bore,
As to wisdom wedded
 Virtue brings forth lore !
Flowers from heavens descended,
 Music cheered the morn,
Air was filled with gladness,
 When the babe was born ;
And with brighter beauty
 Queenly mother shone,
Like the famed Vidura
 With her gem and stone !

iv

As the waxing moon in splendour
 Wears a bright and brighter ray,
So the sweet child sweetly added
 Lines of beauty day by day ;
Parvati,—so gossips named her,
 Mountain-child of peerless fame,
Uma,—so her mother called her,
 Uma was her cherished name ;
And on her, the fondling father
 Eyes of soft affection bent,
As the bee is drawn at spring time
 By the blossoming mango's scent !

For as flame is to the bright lamp,
 Milky way to starry heaven,
 Poetry to soul of genius,
 She unto her sire was given ;
 And the sands of Mandakini
 Witnessed gentle Uma's play,
 Girt by maidens of the mountain,
 Merry as the morning's ray ;
 And as swans to Ganga's waters,
 Light to lustrous plants of earth,
 Grace and culture came to Uma,—
 Culture of a former birth !

v

Youth disclosed a woman's beauty,
 Nature's graces void of art,
 Wine's sweet langour void of madness,
 Love's soft glamour not his dart ;
 And as painter's pencil traces
 Blushing bloom of brow and face,
 Or as sunbeams ope the lotus,
 Youth disclosed the maiden's grace !
 From her feet bright tints of crimson
 Seemed to drop at every pace,
 Lotus waved by gentle zyphers
 Move not with a softer grace ;
 And her anklets sweetly tinkled
 As the princess walked in state,
 Stately white birds caught the music,
 Uma caught their graceful gait !
 Tapering limbs in beauty fashioned
 Shewed the Maker's highest skill,
 When He shaped all forms in nature,
 Uma's form was loveliest still ;
 For all bright and beauteous objects,
 Lithesome shape or slender tree,
 Were but models rudely fashioned,—
 In her blent harmoniously !
 Softly swelling, sweetly rounded,
 Uma shewed her girdled charms,—

More than mortal woman's beauty,
Destined for immortal arms ;
And a dark gem decked the girdle
Cast its radiance clear and keen, —
Shaded lines with pencilled beauty
Marked her gently swelling skin.
Curve and dimple sweetly moulded,
On her lithe form softly traced,
Were like steps young Love had fashioned
Nestling in her heaving breast ;
And her young and swelling bosom
Rose voluptuous ; scarce I ween,
Tenderest fibre of the lotus
Found a resting place between !

vi

Soft the blossoms of Sirisa,
Softer Uma's rounded arms, —
Were they chains young Love had fashioned
For the God who owned her charms ?
On her neck and heaving bosom
Hung the pearls in graceful cluster,
Did they lend her brighter beauty,
Did her bosom lend them lustre ?
If the lotus oped its petals
In the beauty of the night,
Moon-lit blossoms then might rival
Uma's face serene and bright ;
If the jasmine bloomed on coral,
Pearls on rosy leaf were set,
Uma's red lips, teeth of whiteness,
Nature then might imitate !
And when from those red lips issued
Voice of music sweet and clear,
In the woods the startled Kokil
Hushed his lay that voice to hear !
And her glances ! Did the wild deer
Learn the dark charm of her eye, —
Did she from the deer of forest
Learn that secret mystery ?

Archéd eye-brows darkly shaded
 Thrilled the gazer's beating heart,
 Were they young Love' bow of prowess
 Quick to send the fatal dart ?
 And in dark and clustering ringlets
 Fell her ample wealth of hair,
 Did the long haired mountain Chowrie
 Hide in shame within her lair ?
 Fairest forms and shapes in nature
 Richest tint and softest shade,
 Were in harmony united
 To create this mountain maid !

vii

Heavenly minstrel Narad,
 Saw her beauty's pride,—
 Saw, the girl was destined
 To be Siva's bride ;
 And no other bridegroom
 Sought her royal sire,—
 Sacred gift is offered
 Only to the Fire ;
 Nor to high-souled Siva
 Was an offer laid,—
 He must seek and conquer
 Who would win a maid !
 Since his former consort
 Left her mortal life,
 Siva was a wanderer,
 Sought no second wife ;
 And where Ganga's waters
 Washed the mountain wood,
 In the fragrant forests
 Oft in penance stood !
 There, his rustic menials,
 Decked in leaf and flower,
 Sported on the red rock
 Rested in the bower ;
 There, the bull of Siva
 On the ice-field stood,

Viewed by beasts with terror,
 Monarch of the wood ;
There the homeless Siva
 Prayed alone and dwelt,
Who shall tell what purpose
 In his heart he felt ?
And the mountain-monarch
 Held him as his guest,
Bade his duteou's daughter
 Wait upon his hest ;
And on Siva waited
 Uma meek of eye,
Woman's beauty moves not
 Him whose thoughts are high ;
And she culled the blossoms,
 Lit the sacred fire,
Fetched the grass and water,
 For Kailasa's Sire !

II

Uma's Youth

Indra and his host of Gods had been expelled from heaven by the Titans. They had been told that a son of Siva, borne by Uma, could alone lead them back to victory and to heaven. They therefore sent Kandarpa the God of Love, to the earth, to inspire Siva with an affection for the mountain maid.

i

Banished by the conquering Titans
 Homeless lived the gods of heaven,—
 Indra turned to Love for succour,
 Wondrous power to Love is given !
 Seated next to sovran Indra,
 Greeted by his gracious word,
 God of Love with due obeisance
 Questioned thus his anxious lord :
 "Speak thy mandate, Lord of creatures,
 Thou canst probe their purpose best,
 And thy summons is a favour,
 Higher grace,—thy royal best !
 Who by penance long and arduous
 Seeks to wrest thy heavenly throne ?—
 Shaft of Love can conquer penance,
 Anchorites may prowess own !
 Who renouncing earthly pleasures
 Seeks the life of loneliness ?—
 Woman's glance can vanquish hermit,
 Monks their magic power confess !
 Who, by Sukra taught in wisdom,
 Longs to tread the narrow way ?—
 As the flood sweeps o'er a kingdom,
 Love o'erwhelms poor wisdom's sway !
 Hath some dame of rigid virtue
 With a passion fired thy heart ?—
 She shall flame with answering passion,
 Women know my conquering dart !
 Hath some wronged, disdainful damsel
 Turned on thee her wrathful eye ?—

She shall pine with longing langour,
 On a bed of leaves shall lie !
 Rest thy bolt, grim God of thunder,
 Wondrous is my softer dart, —
 Pouting red lips humble heroes,
 Bright eyes tame the Titan's heart !
 Mighty Siva, God of bright gods,
 Owns my shaft's resistless charms, —
 Love and Springtime well may conquer
 Trident-wielding Siva's arms !”

ii

Rashly thus Kandarpa boasted
 Power to quell Kailasa's Lord,
 And, well-pleased, the God of thunder
 Took him promptly at his word :
 “True my friend ! The forkéd lightning
 Is my all resistless dart,
 Yet on saints my bolt is powerless,
 Saint and sinner own thy art !
 Well I know thy might resistless,
 Ask thee mighty work to share,
 Who but world-sustaining Sesa
 Weight of solid earth could bear ?
 Thou hast said, on peerless Siva
 Speeds thy unresisted dart,
 Thou hast therein told the wishes
 Bright gods cherish in their heart ;
 Born of Him, a conquering leader
 Will o'er Titan foes prevail,
 But to love and happy wedding
 Who but thee can Siva quell ?
 May he eye with soft affection
 Daughter of the mountain king,
 She will make a worthy consort
 And to gods their fortunes bring ;
 She, by mountain-monarch's mandate,
 Waits on Siva in his rites ;
 So the heavenly nymphs have told me,
 Those who scan the mountain heights ;

Speed, then, in this heavenly mission
 High success and fame attain,
 For the task awaits thy effort
 As the seed awaits the rain !
 May thy shining dart, Kandarpa
 Win us heaven's perennial bliss,
 Fame awaits on all achievements,
 Highest fame on deeds like this ;
 Gods are suppliants for thy favour,
 Weal of worlds awaits thy power,
 Bloodless is thy high achievement,
 Glory is thy destined dower !
 God of Spring will work conjointly,
 He is e'er thy helping friend,
 When the red flame springs in radiance,
 Winds their aid spontaneous lend !"
 Indra spake ; and gently smiling
 Stroked the beaming God of Love,
 Proud Kandarpa bowed obeisance,
 Left for Himalaya's grove.

iii

Where in contemplation
 Siva lived alone,
 Young Love flew with ardour
 To his duty prone ;
 And the peace-disturber
 Merry Spring-time came,
 Rousing hearts of hermits
 To unwonted flame ;
 Southern sun untimely
 Turned his chariot north,
 And the south wind's kisses
 Waked to joy the earth !
 Asok bloomed spontaneous,
 Touched by maid nor wife,
 Though 'tis said a woman
 Wakes that tree to life ;
 Mango-flowers, leaf-feathered,
 Where like darts of flame,

Bees like graven letters
 Marked the Love-God's name ;
Scentless Karnikara
 Maidens do not prize,—
Nature oft to beauty
 Deeper worth denies ;
Red Palasa blossomed
 In its crimson drest,—
Love's caressing tokens
 On the woodland's breast ;
And the blushing green wood
 Glowed like nymph of sky,—
Mango-shoots her red lips,
 Bees her dark bright eye !

iv

Wild deer with new ardour
 Ranged among the trees,—
By the flower-dust blinded
 Sought the southern breeze ;
Kokils fed on mangoes
 Chanted sweet and clear,—
Nymphs forgot their coyness
 That wild lay to hear ;
And with ruddier beauty
 Kim-purushas shone,—
Lips of deeper crimson,
 Bosoms warmed by sun !
Aye, the pale-faced hermits
 Felt an inward strife,
From their silent penance
 Woke to surging life ;
And all forest creatures
 Felt the wondrous power,
And in love's sweet dalliance
 Spent the glowing hour !
Bee pursued the female,
 Drank from flower she tasted,
Black buck closed his eyelids,
 By his partner rested ;

Tusker drank the water
 Which the female gave,
 With his mate the Chukwa
 Sported on the wave !
 On the lips of wood-nymphs,
 Faint with toil of song,
 Flushed with wine and langour,
 Swains impassioned hung ;
 And with lips of red-leaf,
 And their flower-gemmed breast,
 Creepers round the tall trees
 In love's dalliance prest !

Y

Vainly rose the voice of music,
 Vain the breezes breathed of love,
 Deep in holy contemplation
 Siva sat within his grove ;
 And outside the hut of creepers
 Watchful Nandi held his wand,
 Placed upon his lips the finger,
 Held in silence all the land !
 Bird and bee were hushed and voiceless,
 Red deer ranged not in that wood,
 By his mandate all the confines
 Like a painted land scape stood ;
 Quelled by Siva's lofty presence,
 Even the God of Love withdrew,
 In a bush of wild Nameru
 Half concealed him from his view !
 On a seat of Deva-daru,
 Covered by the tiger's skin,
 Silent-seated, still and stately,
 Siva's ample form was seen ;
 Frame erect in contemplation,
 Shoulders builded deep and broad,
 Lotus palms conjoined in worship,
 Moveless sat the mighty God !
 Serpents twined around his tresses,
 Beads depended from his ear,

From his blue throat, deeper-shaded,
 Hung the dark skin of the deer ;
 And beneath the ample eye-brows
 Half was seen each radiant eye,
 Shaded by the moveless lashes
 Fixed in contemplation high ;
 Like the deep cloud,—dark but silent,
 Like the ocean,—vast but still,
 Like the flame,—by winds unshaken,
 Dreaded God of dauntless will !
 And a radiance bright and beaming,
 Which his ample forehead flung,
 Lighted up the inner crescent
 On his God-like locks that hung ;
 Quelled each outer sense and feeling,
 Fixed each sense in lofty thought,
 He whom sages call ETERNAL
 In his self the Great Self sought !

vi

Him,—inviolatè and unconquered,—
 God of Love with awe surveyed,
 From his trembling, nerveless fingers
 Bow and arrow fell in dread ;
 But his faint heart filled with gladness,
 Flame of courage leapt to light,
 As, encircled by her maidens,
 Beauteous Uma burst on sight !
 Bearing wreaths of Karni-kara,
 Red Asoka's ruby store,
 Garlanded with Sindhu-vara,
 Wealth of spring the maiden bore ;
 Wearing scarf like molten sunlight
 On her swelling bosom laid,
 Like a blossom-weighted creeper
 Softly stepped the mountain-maid !
 Holding oft the flowery girdle
 Slipping from her narrow zone,—
 Brighter bow-string for his arrows
 God of Love did never own ;—

Waving back with fan of lotus
 Timidly the thirsty bee,—
 Well her lips might tempt the insect
 From the honey of the tree ;—
 Fresh and fragrant from the forest
 Bright and beauteous Uma came,
 And a new born hope and ardour
 Thrilled Kandarpa's heart to flame !
 Softly in the grove she entered,
 As the God immersed in thought
 Found within his radiant bosom
 Holy Light which he had sought ;
 Slowly then from contemplation
 Lord of creatures, Siva woke,
 Wore a lighter grace and station
 When the holy trance was broke.

vii

Watchful Nandi spake of Uma,
 Waiting with her duteous love,
 Gracious Siva gave permission,
 And she came within the grove ;
 And her maidens bowed to Siva,
 Strewed around his blessed feet,
 Flower and young leaf they had gathered,
 Fresh and fragrant, soft and sweet ;
 Uma too, in pious reverence,
 Bent to do obeisance meet,
 And the buds that starred her tresses
 Sweetly rained on Siva's feet !
 " Live to be a dear-loved consort,
 Live to be a loving wife,"
 Thus the bright God blessed the maiden,
 For the gods can bless our life ;
 And as moth unto the bright flame,
 God of Love flew to the scene,
 Watching this auspicious moment
 With his arrow bright and keen !
 Garland of the seed of lotus,
 Ripened by Maudakni's wave,

Wreathed by her own rosy fingers,
 Uma unto Siva gave ;
 Gently touching hands so tender
 Siva took the offered wreath,
 God of Love then took his arrow
 Keener than the shaft of death !
 Silent heaved the heart of Siva
 Like the ocean's heaving swell,—
 On her face and lips of coral
 His impassioned glances fell ;
 She with woman's inborn instinct
 Knew the import of the glance,—
 Brow and bosom flushed and crimsoned,
 Uma stood as in a trance !
 Then with strong and godlike effort
 Siva quelled the rising flame,
 Sought with cold and cruel glances
 Whence the sudden impulse came ;
 And he marked the young Kandarpa,
 Leaning still on bended knee,
 Bow of blossoms still encircled,
 Right hand drawn unto his eye !
 Then arose a mighty anger,—
 Bright Gods know his wrath too well,
 As from cloud the lurid flashes,
 From his eye the red flame fell ;
 "Spare, O spare !" the bright Gods uttered, —
 Ere these accents, winged their way,
 Burnt by Siva's flashing glances
 Lifeless Love in ashes lay !

viii

With the young Kandarpa,
 Gentle Rati fell, —
 Grief hath power o'er bright Gods,
 Sorrows, who can quell ?
 As on tree the lightning
 On them fell his wrath,—
 He to unknown regions
 Silent saught his path !

Silent wended Uma
To her home again,—
Speaks no maid her sorrows
When she loves,—in vain !
But her father fathomed
Feelings unexpressed,—
Saw the tears she shed not,
Held her in his breast !

III

Uma's Penance and Love

i

For she loved and lost, —sweet Uma
 Did herself no longer prize,—
 What is woman's winning beauty
 If it please not lover's eyes ?
 She would move by lofty penance
 If her graces failed to move,—
 Win by worth and not by beauty
 Life's fruition,—heart's true love !
 Vainly strove the doting mother
 To restrain the wayward child,
 Held her in her loving bosom,
 Spake to her in accents mild :
 "Stay at home, for arduous penance
 Suits not, child, thy tender make,
 Light-winged bees may rest on blossoms,
 Birds their silken frame would break !"
 Still with mother's love she pleaded,
 Vainly urged a mother's force,
 Woman's will and running river,
 Who can turn them from their course ?
 By her maids did silent Uma
 To her sire her purpose own,—
 She would be a lonely hermit,
 She would dwell in forests lone ;
 He had read her secret purpose,
 He approved her dauntless will,—
 Uma in her youth and beauty
 Went to Gauri's lonely hill !

ii

Pearls, that in a graceful cluster
 On her neck and shoulders fell,
 She forsook ; and barks of wild trees
 Scarce enclosed her bosom's swell ;

And her rich and raven tresses
 Wildly matted now she wore,
 So on wild moss blows the lotus
 Where no bee purloins its store !
 Holy strings of grass of Munja
 Did her girdle chain replace,
 Dyed her skin with deeper crimson
 By its rustic rude embrace ;
 Brow and bosom, lip and eye-lash
 Knew no more the toilet's need,
 For her soft and reddened fingers
 Culled the grass and told the bead ;
 Flowers that dropped from scented tresses
 Strewed no more a royal bed,
 On the bare rocks Uma rested
 Pillowed on her arms her head !
 To the creeper, zypher-shaken,
 Yielded she her movements light,
 To the antelope of forest
 Lent her glances soft and bright ;
 To the plants with mother's tendence
 Drink of water did she pour,
 Like a first born dear to Uma,
 Dear as child she later bore ;
 To the trusting deer of forest
 Gave she grain for which they came,
 Loved their eyes so soft and tender
 Till her maidens blushed with shame !
 Baths performed, the fires she lighted,
 Hymns she sang of holy love,
 Till the sages came to see her,
 Holiest hermit in the grove ;
 Beasts forgot their mutual struggle,
 Trees with gifts of blossoms stood,
 Bright fires blazed upon the altar,
 Holy was her hermit-wood !

For by highest effort
 Highest meed is won ;
And her frame so tender
 Hermit's toil did bear,
Like a golden lotus
 Strong, though fresh and fair !
Flaming fires in summer
 Round her radiant shone,
As she sat in prayer
 Gazing on the sun ;
Like a sun-browned lotus,
 Crimsoned was her face,
And a darker shadow
 Dimmed her eye's soft grace ;
Springs that fed the creeper
 Drink to Uma brought,
Save the moon's sweet moisture,
 Food she never sought !
Rains that after summer
 Cooled the parchéd soil,
Drew a sigh of gladness
 From her in her toil ;
On her eye and red lip,
 On her bosom's swell,
Rolled the fresh born rain drop,
 Glistening as it fell ;
And the midnight witnessed,
 With its lightning eye,
Her in rain and tempest
 Neath the open sky !
After rains the winter
 Saw the tireless maid
In the ice-bound water
 Where the Chukwas played ;
And her lips were parted,
 Fragrant was her face,
Like a water lotus
 Soft and sweet her grace !
Fruit and shoot spontaneous
 Are the hermit's due,

She no wild fruit tasted,
 She no young shoot knew ;
 Thus by long endurance,
 Tender through her frame,
 She than holiest hermits
 Won a holier fame !

iv

Beaming with a righteous radiance,
 Came a youth when spring time came,
 Wearing skins and matted tresses,
 Glassing Heaven in human fame !
 Honour to the lofty stranger
 And obeisance Uma paid,
 Even on her, a forest dweller,
 Grace of form its impress made ;
 She unto the pious pilgrim
 Fruit and crystal water brought,
 He unto the fair devotee
 Courteously disclosed his thought.
 "Doth this wood provide, fair maiden,
 Grass and fuel for thy rite,
 Water for thy day's ablutions,
 For thy worship blossoms bright ?
 Doth the creeper of the woodland,
 Nourished by thy tender care,
 Ceaseless bloom in leaf and blossom
 Like thy pale lips soft and fair ?
 And the red deer of the forest,
 Fed by thee both morn and late,
 Do they claim thy sweet affection
 As thy glance they imitate ?
 Grace of form hides inner beauty,
 Truly thus our sages say,
 For thy deeds to holy hermits
 Well may point the righteous way ;
 Not this sky-descended Ganga,
 Wafting flowers from heavenly hands,
 Like thy spotless fame and virtue
 Sanctifies these sacred lands !

Holy rites than worldly objects
 Sure a higher charm must claim,
 Since despising rank and riches
 Thou dost long for hermit's fame ;
 Deem me, fair one, not a stranger,
 Since thou holdst me as thy guest,
 On brief words in candour spoken
 Love and friendship often rest ;
 Pardon, then, a friend's presumption,
 If as friend I dare to speak,
 Brahmans are by nature curious,
 And for further light I seek.

v

" Thou art born of highest lineage,
 Decked with charms few women know, —
 Wherefore then this arduous penance,
 What more gifts can Heaven bestow ?
 Women stung with shame and insult
 Oft in forest shades reside, —
 Can such sorrow touch thee maiden
 In thy youth and beauty's pride ?
 Who could in thy father's mansions,
 Princess, cause thy heart to bleed,
 Who could from the jewelled serpent
 Wrest the jewel in his greed ?
 Wherefore hidest in these wild barks
 Bloom of youth and beauty's might,
 Doth the young night, star-resplendent,
 Wear the morning's garish light ?
 Not for joys of heaven thy penance, —
 For this realm is bright as sky,
 Not for loved and worthy suitor, -
 He would range the world for thee !
 Yet that sigh, that heaving bosom,
 Speaks a woman's secret smart,
 Who could be thy loved and chosen,
 Chosen, who could loveless part ?
 Can he mark unmoved thy penance,
 Forehead which no flowers adorn,

Bloodless brow and matted tresses
 Dust-embrowed like ripened corn;
 Can he coldly view thy bosom,
 Lighted erst by gem and stone,
 Shaded now by summer's radiance,
 Lightless like the morning moon?
 Drunk with fortune's fickle favour,
 Darkly lives he in a trance,
 Who with eager love and passion
 Meets not Uma's loving glance;
 Speak thy secret! If thy feelings
 To some errant youth incline,
 I have somewhat earned by penance,
 Half of what I own be thine!"

vi

Uma silent listened,
 Spake not in reply,
 To her waiting maiden
 Turned her bashful eye;
 She by Uma's mandate
 Mournful tale revealed,
 Why she toiled in penance,
 Why her love concealed?
 "She the gods despising
 Fixed on Him her thought,
 Who hath conquered passion,—
 Beauty moves him not;
 Young Love's cruel arrow,
 Useless on the god,
 Fell on Uma's bosom,—
 Drank her dearest blood!
 In her father's mansions
 Then she found no rest,
 In the icy grottos
 Ceaseless burnt her breast;
 In the midnight silence
 She of Siva sung,
 Nymphs of wood and mountain
 Wept to hear her song!

Pale light of the morning
Saw her in a dream,
Clasping empty shadow,
Calling Siva's name ;
Red light of the gloaming
Saw his face pourtrayed,
To the painted image
She her thoughts conveyed ;
Till at last despairing,
Left her father's home,
To engage in penance
And in woods to roam !
On the trees she planted
Red ripe fruit hath grown,
But her love's young sapling
Joy nor hope hath known ;
Will the cruel Siva
Ever quench her sorrow,
As the rain of summer
Fills the thirsty furrow ?"
Uma still was silent,
Still enquired the youth,
If this was a fable,
If this was the truth ;
Counting beads of crystal,
Bending down her head,
Bashful, tearful Uma
In a whisper said :
"Thou has heard all truly
What this heart hath moved,
If I hoped too wildly,
Greatly I have loved !"

vii

"Known to me,"—the hermit answered,—
"He, the object of thy love,
And forgive me, gentle maiden,
If thy choice I scarce approve ;
Scarce I fathom, lovely Uma,
How these gentle hands of thine

Shall, with wedding wreath encircled,
 Clasp his hands which snakes entwine ;
 And a young wife's bridal garment,
 Traced with birds of plumage fair,
 Scarce will match his blood-stained mantle,
 Skins and barks he loves to wear !
 In thy father's stately mansions
 Flowery paths thy feet have trod,—
 Wilt thou now on sites unholy
 Wander with thy homeless god ?
 Fragrant with the scent of *Chandan*
 Is thy young and virgin breast,—
 On his bosom smeared with ashes
 Wilt thou Uma, take thy rest ?
 Royal tuskers caparisoned,
 Well beseem a royal bride,—
 Wilt thou learn, my gentle princess,
 Siva's graceless bull to ride ?
 Lightless is the lunar crescent
 Which depends from Siva's head,—
 Loveless too shall be the consort
 Whom the uncouth god shall wed !
 Wild his mein, obscure his lineage,
 Wealth nor rank his guise betrays,
 Grace he owns nor courtly virtue,
 By which bridegrooms win our praise ;
 Turn, O turn from such a suitor,
 Nor to him thy beauty yield,
 Not on darksome funeral places
 Holy men their altars build !”

viii

Quivering lip and archéd eyebrow,
 And her bosom's angry swell,
 Spoke of Uma's rising passion
 As on him her glances fell !
 “Knowing little, speakest lightly,”—
 Proudly thus the maid replied,—
 “Lofty souls of unknown splendour
 - Flippant mortals thus derided

THE BRIDAL OF UMA

Refuge of the wide creation,
Ruler of Immortals' fate,
Doth he brook our mortal customs,
Pomp and pagentry and state ?
Void of wealth,—but source of riches,
Homeless,—ranging earth and sky,
Wild of mein,—his grace pervadeth,
Who can comprehend the High ?
Wearing gems or coiling serpents,
Broidered lace or skin and skull,
Who can guess his real image,
Glassed in worlds, pervading all ?
And if ashes smear his bosom,
They can bless and sanctify
Men below and bright Immortals,
Dwellers of the azure sky !
And if sacred bull his emblem,
Indra with obeisance meet
From his crown of heavenly blossoms
Drops the flower-dust on its feet !
Didst thou say,—obscure his lineage
And unknown his race on earth ?—
Bright Gods own him as Creator,
First Creator hath no birth !
But thou speakest as thou knowest,
Cease thy wrangling and depart,—
Be his virtues great or scanty,
He hath won my faithful heart ;
Open not thy lips unholy,
Tell me not that tale of shame,
Not alone the man who slanders,
He who listens shares the blame !"

ix

Turned away the damsel
From the stranger guest,—
Through the bursting wild bark
Heaved her angry breast !
Smiling he embraced her,
All disguise removed,—

Uma gazed in wonder,
 'Twas her lost and loved !
Like a trembling lotus
 Shook her tender frame,
O'er her brow and bosom
 Quick the red blood came !
Still with foot uplifted,
 Stayed not, could not go,
Like a rock bound torrent,
 Stopped its onward flow !
"Maiden", so spake Siva,
 "Take this hand of mine,
Won by love and penance
 Henceforth I am thine !"
With a holier beauty
 Heavenly Uma shone,
For by toil and duty
 Destiny is won !

V

The Penance of Arjun, by Bharavi

THE poet Bharavi lived shortly after Kalidasa, probably in the sixth century. His great poem *Kiratarjuniyam* describes in eighteen books how Arjun won celestial arms by his penance and valour. Books I, III, VI, XI and XII of the original poem tell the main story, and have been translated in the following pages. Some verses from Book XVIII of the original have been added at the end,

BOOK I

Draupadi's Remonstrance

KING YUDHISHTHIR had lost his kingdom, and had retired into forests with his wife and brothers. He sent a forester to observe how his foe ruled the kingdom he had won. The forester returned, and gave a glowing account of Duryodhan's administration. Yudhishthir's wife listened to this account with a woman's jealousy, and counselled instant war to recover the lost kingdom.

i

Sent to Kuru-land to fathom
 How Duryodhan ruled his men,
 He,—a dweller of the forest,—
 Came once more to Dwaita's glen ;
 Freely to the King Yudhishthir,
 He, Duryodhan's glories told,
 For they love not fulsome lying,
 Those who serve the true and bold ;
 Strong of heart, the exiled monarch
 Urged the spy his tale to tell,
 Rich in language, deep in import,
 Clear the words that from him fell !

ii

" Who by King of men is trusted
 Loves not to deceive his Lord,
 Pardon, then, if free my accents,—
 Seldom true is honeyed word ;
 False the friend who basely flatters,
 False the king who brooks a lie,
 Only those who join in virtue
 Conquer Fortune's favours high ;
 I, a dweller of the woodlands,
 Deep designs but dimly trace,
 If I comprehend thy foeman,
 'Tis, O monarch, by thy grace !
 Seated on the throne of nations,
 Still he dreads thee, exiled Lord,

Realm, by trick of dice he conquered,
 Rules by righteous deed and word ;
 And with seeming virtue vested
 Still he apes thy inborn grace,—
 Better war with open foeman
 Than communion with the base !
 Veiling well his pride and passion
 Manu's path he seeks to tread,
 Toiling noon and dewy evening
 Kuru's glories strives to spread ;
 And he treats as friends his menials,
 Treats his friends as nearest kin,
 While a semblance of affection
 Darkly hides his thoughts within !
 Still with equal love the monarch
 Courts each kingly virtue well,—
 Varying graces sought and conquered
 In his heart harmonious dwell ;
 Bounty speaks his royal kindness,
 Gifts with royal courts'y flow,
 And his presents, never ceasing,
 Only men of virtue know ;—
 Nor for profit, nor in anger,
 But to guard the righteous cause,
 On his foe or on his children
 Visits sins with equal laws !
 Trusty are his palace soldiers,
 Dauntless are his brow and face,
 Bounteous are his sacrifices,
 Endless is his royal grace ;
 And his plans devised by wisdom,
 And pursued with silent toil,
 Spread for him a happy future,
 Bless the children of the soil !

iii

"Cars and steeds of warrior-chieftains
 Throng his palace halls around,
 Tuskers sent by friendly monarchs
 With their perfume fill the ground ;

Kuru-lands are rich in harvests,
Ripening without tillers' toil,
Ask no rain, since Kuru's monarch
Shows his blessings on the soil ;
And his rule of peace and plenty
Blesses towns and fertile fields,
And impregnate with his bounty
Earth her ample produce yields !
Chieftains from each town and castle,
Warriors famed in toil and strife,
Muster, not against their monarch,
But to guard him with their life ;
And his spies can darkly fathom
Deep device of rival kings,
His device,—like work of Nature,—
Is revealed by fruit it brings !
Never bends his bow in battle,
Frowns his forehead never shade,
For his rule his subjects cherish
Like a garland on their head ;
Aye, upon his gallant younger
He hath placed his regal might,
Saint-like, from the world retiring,
He performs each holy rite !
Conqueror of all his foemen,
Lord of earth begirt by sea,
Master of a rule unbounded,—
Still Duryodhan quakes at thee ;
Let his courtiers name Yudhishtir,
Speak of Arjun's might of arm,—
And the monarch bends his forehead
Like a snake subdued by charm ;
Bent is he to do thee battle,
Be prepared thy foe to meet,—
This, O King, my humble message,
Such, I lay it at thy feet."

iv

Then the woodsman, honoured duly,
Went his way o'er hill and dale,

And Yudhishtir to his consort
 Told once more the wond'rous tale ;
 Dark remembrance of her insults
 In her heaving bosom woke,
 And, to rouse her husband's anger,
 Drupad's daughter proudly spoke.

v

"Counsel to a sapient monarch
 Is rebuke from woman weak,
 But ignoring wifely duty,
 Pardon, if my feelings speak ;
 Mighty warriors, thy forefathers,
 Held their rule o'er Kuru's land,
 But, as tuskers cast their garlands,
 Thou hast hurled it from thy hand !
 Weak are they who with the wily
 Deal not with responsive wife,
 For like darts on mail-less warriors
 Artful foemen on them steal ;
 Weak art thou who hast forsaken
 Glory of thy ancient house,—
 More than life by warriors cherished,
 Dearer than their wedded spouse !

vi

"Godlike man ! Now sadly treading
 Paths despised by proud and free,
 Doth not rising wrath consume thee
 As the flames consume the tree ?
 Men spontaneous yield to heroes
 Who have will to face their foes,
 But for faint, forgiving creatures
 Love nor friend nor foeman knows
 Sandal-graced was royal Bhima,—
 Dust-besmeared he roams the hills,
 Scarce I know, O soul of virtue,
 If thy heart with pity thrills ;
 Conqueror of northern nations,
 Arjun scattered wealth and gold,—

Mark him now, O saintly hermit,
Bark-clad, sleeping on the wood ;
And the twins, thy youngest brothers,
Princes born and great and good,—
Mark them roaming in the jungle,
Even like tusked of the wood !
Scarce I guess thy feelings, monarch,
Strange and diverse are our hearts,
But reflection on thy sorrow
Cruel grief to me imparts ;
Erst my lord from royal slumber
Waked to hear the song of praise,
Now out stretched on jungle heather
Hears the cry the jackals raise ;
Erst on food by Brahmans tasted
Lived my king in kingly fame,
Now he feeds on forest berries
Pale and lightless,—like his fame !
On thy feet, on jewels resting,
Vassal kings their blossoms dropped,
Now they range the thorny wood lands
By the deer or hermit cropped ;
Most I grieve,—insulting foemen
Mock thy low dejected state,—
Heroes win a higher glory
If they strive with adverse fate !

vii

Conquer back thy glory,
Vengeful schemes devise,
Anchorites, not heroes,
Meek forbearance prize ;
For if kings and chieftains
Bore their insults tame,
Lost were worth of warriors
Lost were monarch's fame ;
Or if patient suffering
Still for thee hath charms,
Prate thy hymns like hermits,
Leave these kingly arms !

But a higher duty
Fits thy royal fame,
Break this plighted treaty,—
Treaty of our shame ;
Monarchs bent on conquests
Fasten on their foe
Blame for breach of treaty,—
Blame for war and woe ;
Pale from loss of glory,
Weak from loss of might,
Rise like sun in splendour,—
Quell this darksome night !

BOOK II

Vyasa's Advice

The remonstrance of Yudhishthir's wife was in vain. Yudhishthir had plighted his word, and would not depart from the treaty. At last the great saint Vyasa came on a visit to him, told him that war was inevitable, and advised him to send his brother Arjun to perform penances in order to win celestial arms.

i

Beaming with a gentle lustre
 Soft as rays of autumn night,
 Graced with auburn locks that clustered
 Like a cloud of golden light,—
 Glowing with a god-like mercy
 In his more than human face,
 Filling every living creature
 With responsive love and grace,—
 Speaking by his look and gesture
 Peace that dwells in realms aloft,
 Waking trust and true affection
 By his glances sweet and soft,—
 Herald of the holy Vedas
 Vyasa to the monarch went,
 And the courteous King Yudhishthir
 Questioned thus the mighty Saint.

ii

"Unattained by life-long merit
 Is such favour great and high,
 Like a holy life's fruition,
 Like the rain from cloudless sky ;
 Holy rites have borne their harvest,
 Brahmans' blessings brought their meed,
 For thy sight is highest honour,
 Truest blessing in my need !
 Vedic Bard ! Thy grace can conquer
 Ills with which this earth is rife,
 And thy love like love of BRAHMA
 Sanctifies our mortal life ;

Not the moon's benignant radiance
 Cheers my sad and lightless eye,
 But my heart forgets its sadness
 Mighty Saint ! since thou art nigh !
 Thy desires I may not question,
 Peaceful souls have no desires,
 But a wish to hear thy utterance
 My enquiring heart inspires."
 Thus in graceful words the Monarch
 To the Bard of Vedas prayed,
 Anxious for the Monarch's glory
 He unto Yudhishtir said.

iii

"He who strives for earthly glory
 Bears for all an equal love,
 He who strives for peace and virtue
 Should with higher justice move,
 Yet my partial heart, Yudhishtir,
 For thy virtues leans to thee,—
 Virtue binds the lonesome hermit
 From all earthly bondage free !
 Are ye not of royal lineage
 Like the youth who fills the throne,
 Hath his father lost his reason
 Thus to wrench from you your own ;
 And will Fortune help a warrior
 Who on Karna places trust,
 Doth not faith with false and faithless
 Lead to fame and honour lost ?
 When they left the righteous pathway,
 You remained in virtue strong,
 When they changed, still true and changeless
 You forgave the proud man's wrong ;
 And they sought to shame you vainly,
 Man of piety and love,
 Every trial, wrong and insult
 Higher virtue in you prove !

iv

"Listen yet ; by valour only
 You can win in battle's hour,

For your foe is strong in combat,
 Boundless in his wealth of power ;
 Jamadagni's son who conquered
 Thrice seven times the kings of earth,
 Great though he,—he owns with terror
 Bhishma's greater, mightier worth ;
 Death is powerless, Death is conquered,
 By that chief's resistless might,
 And the field of battle trembles
 When he enters on the fight !
 Doughty Drona in the battle
 Speeds his darts in furious ire,
 Like a world-consuming furnace
 Shooting forth its tongues of fire ;
 Archer Karna learnt his lessons
 From great Jamadagni's son,
 And the King of Terrors trembles
 At his deeds of valour done !
 These are chiefs, believe me monarch,
 Whom in battle thou shalt face,
 Arm thyself by toil and penance,
 Seek celestial help and grace ;
 Let young Arjun seek the weapons
 Gods themselves by worship crave,—
 This, Yudhishthir, is my message,
 Win the gift that speeds the brave ! ”

V

Then the gallant archer Arjun
 Stept forth reverent and slow,
 Bending at his elder's mandate
 Like a student bending low ;
 And the gift of saintly Vyasa,—
Mantra of the holy spell,—
 As the sunlight falls on lotus,
 On the valiant Arjun fell !
 And the *mantra's* holy radiance,
 Which the warrior proudly wore,
 Oped his inner eye of reason,
 Filled his heart with sacred lore ;

And his form betokened glory,
 And his heart was fixed and strong,
 Vyasa spake of penance holy
 To the warrior brave and young.
 "Strengthened by this *mantra*, Arjun,
 Yield thy warrior-pride to none,
 Girt in arms perform thy penance,
 Holy rites by hermits done ;
 And this Yaksha guide will lead thee
 To the lofty golden hill,
 There, perform thy sacred duty,
 Do the Thunder-Wielder's will !"
 Speaking thus unto the warrior
 Vyasa vanished from his view,
 And obedient to his mandate
 Came the Yaksha tried and true ;
 Warrior Arjun, faithful Yaksha,
 Found a true friend, each in each,
 For the pure are quick in trusting,
 And their love not far to reach !

vi

As a darkness fills Sumeru
 When the god of day departs,
 Parting from the warrior Arjun
 Filled with grief his brothers' hearts ;
 But dispelled by sense of duty,—
 Though so bitter was their lot,—
 Sorrow in the royal brothers
 Yielded to a higher thought ;
 Hope and trust in Arjun's prowess,
 Hatred of the common foe,
 Confidence in brighter future,
 Quelled the sense of present woe.
 Shadows leave the hours of daylight,
 Seek the stillness of the night,—
 Sorrows left the warlike brothers,
 Filled Draupadi in their might ;
 'And as snow-flakes fill the lotus
 Rising tear-drops filled her eye,

But to weep were inauspicious,
 Though her bosom heaved a sigh.
Look of tenderness and sadness
 Did her woman's glances send,
As a dear and sad memento
 To a loved and parting friend ;
And her heart was wrung by anguish,
 Like a creeper rent and broke,
And her voice was choked by tear drops,
 As in broken voice she spoke.

vii

“ Sole restorer of our glory,
 Now, alas, in darkness lost,
Let thy manly heart and purpose
 By no saddening thought be crost ;
For in quest of fame and glory,
 And of deeds which records fill,
Fortune ever leans to heroes
 Labouring with a dauntless will !
Kings in glory rule the wide earth,
 Conquering foemen in the strife,
We have lost that kingly glory
 Dear to warrior as his life,
Till the chiefs of distant regions
 Doubting heard our tale of shame,
Staining all our former valour
 And our world-embracing fame !
Tale of shame which dims our future,
 Wipes each deed of valour done,
As the shadows of the evening
 Wipe the glimmers of the sun,—
Tale of wrong and bitter insult
 Rankling like a cruel smart,
And the thought of pain well freshen
 When, O Arjun, thou shalt part !
Like a wounded forest-monarch
 Changed thou art, thy glory faded,
Void of pride and pomp and prowess
 Like the day by darkness shaded ;

Arms of war that once bedecked thee
 Long unused have lost their gleam,
 Form of pride hath changed and withered,
 Like the summer's dwindled stream !
 By these tresses, young Duhsasan
 Dragged me to the council hall,
 Still unbraided, powerless Arjun,
 They remind thee of thy fall ;
 What is *Kshatra*,—true-born warrior,—
 If he fails to help and save,
 What is *Karmuk*,—bow of battle,—
 If it fails the true and brave ?
 Vain thy virtues, mute thy glory,
 And inglorious is thy might,
 Or partaking of our sorrow
 Do they imitate our plight ?

viii

" But they rashly tempt thee; Arjun,—
 Lion's wrath the hunters shun,—
 Duty for thy worth elects thee
 As the day elects the sun !
 For a hero's deed of valour
 Fills the glorious rolls of fame,
 And a hero's name is foremost
 When they count each glorious name ;
 Be a hero in thy striving,
 And if sometimes in thee rise
 Thoughts of sadness and of sorrow,
 Indra helps the brave and wise !
 Free from every secret evil
 Do thy penance lone and long,
 Guard thee from each lurking danger,
 Secret foe who smites the strong ;
 Duty calls thee ! Part we, Arjun,
 Do the Saint's behest in peace,
 And our dearest hopes fulfilling
 Seek once more our dear embrace !"

ix

' Thus spake Drupad's daughter
 Rousing Arjun's wrath,

He was like the red sun
In the northern path ;
And his mighty weapons
Manfully he wore,
Like a spell terrific
Form of terror bore !
Bow the dread of foemen,
Arrows keen and dread,
And the well-filled quiver,
And the shining blade,
And the gem-wrought armour,
Like the star-wrought sky,
On his deep-scarred person
Donned the warrior high !
Guided by the Yaksha
To the hills he went,
Hermits filled with sorrow
Pious wishes sent ;
And the sky breathed music,
Flowers fell from above,
And the ocean's breakers
Clasped the earth in love !

BOOK III

Arjun's Penance

Arjun followed the advice of Vyasa, and engaged in a long and arduous penance to win celestial arms. The news of the devotions of the unknown worshipper, armed like a warrior, were carried to Indra, the god of sky.

i

Arjun, bent on mighty penance,
 Followed Ganga's rocky course,
 Scaled the hills, as Vishnu mounted
 Golden bird that heavenward soars ;
 Forest trees like holy hermits
 Sang his praise by hum of bees,
 Bent their heads to yield their blossoms,
 Shaken by the gentle breeze ;
 And the woodland-scented zephyr,
 Saturate with Ganga's spray,
 Blew on Arjun's face and forehead,
 Clasped him in their amorous play ;
 And the mountain torrent's music,
 And the forest's mingled cry,
 Stirred his heart like beat of war-drum,
 Waked in him a purpose high !

ii

Wild cascades and rolling rivers
 Broke the tall tree in their course,
 But the gentle creeper bending
 Escaped their all-resistless force ;
 Tuneful birds arose before him,
 And with voices filled the brake,
 Filled the bosom of the waters,
 Spread a mantle on the lake ;
 Elephants in deeper jungle
 Marked the hills with many a scar,
 "And the moisture from their temples
 Drew the wild bees from afar !

On the lake the golden Chakwa
 Mingled in the wave of gold,
 Till the wild cry of the female
 Jealous love and anguish told ;
 Varying tints upon the waters
 Shewed the gems that hidden lay,
 As the blushes of the maiden
 Secrets of the heart betray ;
 Till the rising mountain tempest
 Broke the waters' silver sheen,
 And the foam like Ketak blossoms,
 Whitened all the woodland scene !

iii

Arjun marked the spots of brightness
 Floating on the water's sheen, —
 Oily creatures of the streamlets
 Gambolled in the caves within ;
 And he saw the shells of mountains
 Lying on their rocky bed, —
 Drops of beauty in them glistened,
 Were they tears in sorrow shed ?
 Creepers bloomed in shoots of crimson,
 Sparkling in the dew-drop's glow, —
 Calling to the eye of lovers
 Lips of red and teeth of snow !
 Tuskers gambolled in the waters,
 Frolicked in the streamlets fair,
 And the perfume from their temples
 Lent a fragrance to the air ;
 From the streams the scaly serpent
 Often darted in the air,
 Breathed its poisoned breath in bubbles
 White as cloudlets soft and fair ;
 Fishes often glanced and sparkled,
 Quick as woman's glances bold,
 And as maids wait on their princess,
 Streams to Ganga's waters rolled !

iv

Arjun scaled a spacious upland,
 Found a spot alone, apart,

Graced by many a flower of forest,
 Pure as purity of heart ;
 And the creepers starred with blossoms,
 Trees where fruits in clusters hung,
 Bent the heart of pious Arjun
 To his penance deep and long ;
 And by rules he fixed his purpose
 On the rites which hermits know,
 What though arduous his devotions,
 Faith of heart can conquer woe !
 Quelling every earthly passion,
 Cleansing sins by holy light,
 Arjun rose in righteous merit
 Like the waxing moon of night ;
 By his ceaseless contemplation
 Cravings of the flesh he stilled,
 Till a perfect peace and calmness
 Arjun's steadfast bosom filled ;
 Till by hymns and high devotion
 He had won the highest grace,
 And within him dwelt harmonious
 Matchless power and mighty peace !



Arjun wore his plaited tresses,
 Red as anchorites should wear,—
 As the tall trees wear their foliage
 Crimsoned by the sunbeams fair ;
 Girt in arms, but calm and saint-like,
 Gentle, but august and tall,—
 Forest creatures knew his kindness
 Love of heart endeareth all !
 Softly on him blew the breezes,
 Shed a fragrance as they went,
 Fiery sun forgot his glamour
 And a chastened radiance lent ;
 And when Arjun plucked the blossoms
 Stately trees bent down their head,
 Earth put forth her softest mantle
 For the hero's nightly bed !

Cloudless sky to him auspicious
Sent its showers the dust to lay,
Kindly nature helped his penance,
Nursed the hermit night and day ;
And the blossom of his fortune
Thus its glorious fruitage bore,—
But these signs changed not his ardour,
Calm and changeless evermore !

vi

Indra's menials in the forest
Witnessed Arjun's rites severe,
Of his penance long and lonesome
Spake to Indra in their fear ;
And before the Thunder-Wielder
Gently their obeisance made,
And in soft and humble accents
Of the unknown hermit said.

vii

“Like a bright star of the sky,
Clad in barks on yonder hill,
One, intent on purpose high,
Doth his rites,—and earth is still !
Arms whose muscles snake-like coil
Hold an ever-bended bow,—
But all gentle are his deeds,
Gentler soul lives not below !
Winds blow soft, the sward is green,
Grateful rains the dust allay,
Elements by worth subdued
In accord obeisance pay ;
Forest beasts their strife forget,
Listen to his ~~beck~~ and word,
Trees on him with blossoms wait,
Mountains own him as their lord ;
Penance speaks a purpose high,
Dauntless mein denotes success,—
Hermit, but a warrior too,
Who he be, we may not guess !

If from saints he counts descent,
Or from warlike kingly line,—
Who can tell, or why in woods
He performs his rites divine ;
If he toils for purpose pure,
If for empire, who can guess,—
Foresters are poor in sense,
Thou must know, and thou canst bless !

BOOK IV

The Avent of Indra

The god Indra was pleased with Arjun's penance, came to visit him in disguise, and counselled him to worship Siva.

i

Arjun by his arduous penance
Won a hermit's holy fame,
Till unto his forest-dwelling
Indra in his mercy came ;
Came disguised,—as come the brights gods,—
Like an ancient anchorite,
Wearied by a tiresome journey,
Weak in limbs and weak in sight.
And his red locks closely plaited
With his white hair mingling fell,
As the evening's crimson radiance
Mingles with the moon beams pale ;
And his eyes bedimmed in lustre,
And by fleecy eye-brows shaded,
Were like winter's withered lotus
By a snow fall pale and faded ;
Yet he seemed, albeit so slender,
Still instinct with strength of life,
Like an old man pale though hearty,
Nourished by a careful wife !
Thus concealed came mighty Indra
Radiant still with heavenly light,
As the sun is hid but faintly
By a cloud-bank, fleecy white ;
With a grace divine he glittered,
Though so ancient and so hoary,
Spreading o'er the hills and woodlands
Lustre of his shaded glory !
Him the pious Arjun welcomed,
Greeted with a kind embrace,—
Sight of friends instils a pleasure
Though unknown to us their face ;

Indra too received with gladness
 Homage which to guests is paid,
 On a seat of wild grass rested,
 And in gentle accents said.

ii

"Well hast thou in early age
 Choice of hermit's duties made,
 Aged mortals like myself
 Oft by worldly thoughts are led ;
 And thy deep devotions, youth,
 Unto higher life will lead,
 Grace of form we often meet
 Grace of heart is rare indeed !
 Transcendent as the autumn cloud
 Pride and pomp of human kind,
 Pleasures please us for a day,
 Bitter sorrows leave behind ;
 Mortals' days are full of ills,
 Unseen comes the hand of death,
 Holy work alone endures,
 Faith survives the fleeting breath ;
 Wisely therefore hast thou chosen
 Rites to bright Immortals dear,
 But, despite thy pious penance,
 Thy attire inspires my fear !

iii

"Skins and barks of forest trees
 Suit the holy anchorite,
 Wherefore then in warlike guise
 Wearest thou this armour bright ?
 If devoid of vain desires
 In the righteous path wouldst go,
 Wherefore then, misguided youth,
 Quivers and this mighty bow ?
 If thy holy penance bids
 Angry thoughts and passions cease,
 Doth this sword like arm of Death
 Lead thy restless heart to peace ?

Much I fear, against some foe
 Seekest thou a vengeance dire,
 Warriors deal in deadly arms,
 Hermits nurse the Holy Fire ;
 He who sighs for warlike fame
 Soils the hermits' holy rite,
 As the fool with hands impure
 Soils the spring, pellucid, bright ;
 Therefore chase this lust of glory,
 For it drives to sinful deeds,
 Casts a stain on stainless virtue,
 And from holy peace misleads.

iv

" Listen more ! Who strives for fame
 Wins on earth a brief success,
 But as rivers end in seas,
 Ends in trouble and distress ;
 Wealth is won by evil ways,
 Leads to thoughts and things unclean,
 Riches bring us cark and care,
 End in suffering and in sin ;
 Impure pleasures, earthly joys
 Stifle strong and steadfast faith,
 And like snakes with poisoned fangs
 Sting the heedless unto death !
 Fickle Fortune, ever quick,
 Loves not with a constant will,—
 Fools her fleeting favours seek,
 Chasing shapeless shadows still ;
 Fortune,—if she spurned the weak,
 On her fame it were no stain,—
 But the constant and the strong,
 Earn the fickle maid's disdain !
 Love is still an emptier shade
 Vanishing in life-long woe,—
 Sad bereavement, young heart's death,
 Bitterest pang on earth below ;
 When we meet the loved and true,
 Lonely places peopled seem,

Penury hath charms to please,
Grief itself is happy dream ;
When we lose the loved and true,
Bright hopes vanish and delude,
Life is like a poisoned dart,
Company is solitude !



“ Thus each fleeting thing of earth
Ends in sorrow and in grief,
Righteousness alone endures,
Faith alone brings true relief ;
For our life is brief and vain,
Pleasures please us for a day,
Holy work survives our breath,
Turn not from the righteous way !
Stain not, youth, these sacred rites
With the lust of fame and war,
Seek the path of lasting bliss,
Leaving earthly things afar ;
Conquer lust of earthly things
Born with mortals at their birth,
Conquest of thy inner self
Is the conquest of the earth ;
Weak are they and narrow-souled,
Worldly power who seek to wield,
Slaves of passion, slaves of lust,
Even like cattle of the field !
Toys that pleased thee yesterday
Ghost-like haunt the vacant mind,
Pleasures fly like fleeting light,
Leave a deeper gloom behind ;
Ever wished but unobtained,
Cherished but to cause us pain,
Never present never gone,
Happiness on earth is vain ;
In this lofty mountain range,
Where the Ganga wanders far,
Strive for thy salvation, youth,
Leave this impure lust of war !”

vi

Indra thus in guise of hermit
 Spake his thoughts and paused awhile,
 And in humble words but forceful
 Arjun answered with a smile.
 " Full of weight and wisdom, father,
 Is thy counsel to my ear,
 Full of sense and deepest import
 Is thy utterance calm and clear ;
 Like an independent Sastra
 In its reasons strong in sooth,
 Like the Vedas sung by Rishis
 Mighty in its holy truth ;
 In its ample force inviolate
 Like the vast inviolate seas,
 Gentle in its soft persuasion
 Like a hermit's soul of peace ;
 He who utters thoughts so noble
 Is a saint of spotless birth,
 He who harbours thoughts so peaceful
 Glasses heaven upon this earth !
 But, unknown to thee, my father,
 Is the purpose of my rites,
 Hence in accents soft and peaceful
 Speakest thou of anchorites ;
 Even the god of speech will falter
 Speaking of a thing unknown,
 Even the highest effort fails us
 By our blindness overthrown !

vii

" Father, thy advice is holy,
 But, alas, it suits not me,
 As the radiant stars of midnight
 Do not suit the light of day ;
 I am of the race of Kshatra,
 Pandu's son, of Pritha born,
 And I serve my honoured elder
 Of his realm and glory shorn ;

And I do this holy penance
As by saintly Vyasa told,
For to please the Thunder-Wielder
By these rites prescribed of old.
Fate's decree is stern and woeful,
Mortals' bliss is often crossed,
For his realm and wife my elder
Staked on game of dice,—and lost ;
Now in evenings long and dreary,
Grieving at their doleful fate,
His fair queen and faithful brothers
Term of my devotions wait.
From our backs they tore the garments,
Shamed us in the palace hall,
Pierced our souls, th' exulting foemen,
With their insults on our fall ;
And in presence of the chieftains
Dragged our chaste and spotless queen,
Death has sealed a vow of vengeance
For that insult fierce and keen !
False Duhsasan base of purpose
Held the dame so pure of mind,
As the gnarled tree of forest
Holds its lengthening shade behind ;
Vain she looked upon her husband
In her sorrow deep and high,
Pride and anguish tore her bosom,
Checked the tear-drop in her eye ;
True to plighted word, he suffered
Insults keen and words unkind,—
What is conquest of our foemen
To such conquest of the mind ?
Noble souls retain their calmness
Though by grief and passions riven,
As the ocean keeps its confines
Though by raging tempest driven !
Friendship with our faithless kinsmen
To this shame and insult led,—
Death awaits the man who slumbers
Neath a falling bank for shade ;

Men who fear no sinful action,
Right from wrong who do not see,—
Who can guess their artful purpose,
Who can fathom Fate's Decree ?

viii

“ Shamed, insulted by our foemen,
Sure this heart had ceased to beat,
But I hoped this arm of vengeance
Would inflict requital meet ;
Shamed, insulted by our foemen,
Low as cattle on the plain,
Scarce we see each other's faces,
Dare not meet the eyes of men !
Humbled by the loss of glory
In the woods our days we pass,
Mortals when bereft of honour
Are like low and trodden grass ;
But survey those snowy summits
By no living creature crossed,
Loftiness is highest virtue,
Honour is our highest boast !
Fickle Fortune frowns or favours,
Changeless lives a hero's fame,
And the name of man befits him
When true glory decks his name ;
Highest he in rolls of honour
Who hath toiled and earned his meed,
And the finger of the reckoner
Points to none of worthier deed !
Even this range of lofty mountains
May be crossed by living wight,
But the man of truth and valour
Is inviolate in his might ;
And his race and land he brightens,
Fills the wide earth with his light,
And his glory's bright effulgence
Pales the radiant Queen of Night ;
And his wrath like flash of lightning
Smites the false and crouching slave,

And his fame through untold ages
Lives among the true and brave !

ix

"Hence I seek not wealth or pleasure,
Fleeting as the torrent's flow,
Nor, afraid of death and danger
Crave the grace the gods bestow ;
But I seek to wash the insult,—
Stain for which this heart hath bled,—
With the tear-drops for our foemen
By their sorrowing widows shed !
If this hope on which I've rested,
Be unreal, idle, vain,
Be it so ;—thy words are wasted,
Pardon if I cause thee pain ;
Till I conquer all my foemen,
Win again our long lost fame,
Vain to me are joys celestial,—
Hindrance to my lofty aim !
For the warrior lives not, breathes not,
Or is dead like trodden grass,
Who will let his good sword slumber
While his fame and glory pass ;
Whose warm blood flows not in anger
When his foemen steal his fame,
Dost thou, man of peace and virtue,
Give him warrior's noble name ?
Vainly he assumes the title
While his right arm wins no meed,
Welcome is the honoured title
Sanctified by manlike deed ;—
He whose name in wonder spoken
Pales the names of other men,
He whose deeds are known to nations,
He is MAN among all men !

x

"Listen more ! Our honoured elder,
Vowing ritribution fell,

Waits my help as thirsty trav'ler
 Waits beside the cooling well ;
 Heedless of my elder's wishes,
 Heedless of his life and peace,
 Can I shirk this task of honour
 False unto my creed and race ?
 Wherefore preachest to me, father,
 Life retired before my time,
 Sages live the life in forest
 Not in youth but after prime ;
 Love of mother, love of brothers,
 Duty to my elder's wife,
 Warrior's task explained by Vyasa,—
 All forbid a forest-life !
 Honour's maxims, gentle hermit,
 Brace the soldier for the fight,
 Not retirement is his duty,
 But to battle for the right ;
 Let me therefore on these mountains
 Until death pursue my aim,
 Or by gracious Indra's succour
 Live to win our long lost fame !”

xi

Arjun spake with fervour
 Thoughts that filled his mind,
 Indra heard with gladness
 And with feelings kind ;
 And the Thunder-Wielder
 Wore his form divine,
 Bade the prince to penance
 Still his heart incline.
 “Unto mighty Siva
 Do thy homage pay,
 He alone can help thee
 In the dubious fray ;
 Peerless in thy prowess,
 Matchless in thy might,
 Win the arms of Siva,
 Conquer in the fight !”

BOOK V

The Advent of Siva

Arjun followed the advice of Indra, and pleased Siva by his penance. Siva appeared before Arjun in the guise of a hunter.

i

Once again, by Indra's mandate,
 Arjun did his pious rites,
 Rendered worship unto Siva
 Dwelling in Kailasa's heights ;
 Firm in faith and pure in purpose,
 Tireless neath the summer sun,
 Moveless in the blast of winter,
 Mightier penance he begun ;
 Mortifying flesh and senses,
 Lonely in his lofty bower,
 Arjun still pursued his duty,—
 High resolve hath wond'rous power !
 Lucious fruit that ripened near him,
 Crystal rill that rippled by,—
 Faith is food unto the righteous,—
 Drew from him nor wish nor sigh ;
 Pale despair nor pride of virtue
 Ever dimmed his sacred toil,
 Lust of flesh nor impure passions
 Did his steadfast penance soil ;
 And he wore a matchless glory,
 Though subdued by rigid rite,
 Trembling hermits marked his prowess,—
 Great in heart are great in might !
 Brighter than the nightly wood-fires
 Shone his light in forests still,—
 Faith is mightier than the ocean,
 Loftier than the towering hill ;
 And his hymns as Arjun chanted,
 And his holy rites begun,
 Beamed upon his face a radiance
 Like the halo of the sun !

ii

Clad in armour dark, he carried
Mighty bow across his chest,—
So the wood-clad darksome mountain
Wears the rainbow on his breast ;
And when for his day's ablutions
Arjun walked in morning hour,
Solid mountains felt his footsteps,—
Holy worth is wondrous power !
Aye, a lustre fell upon him,
As he stood serene and high,
Till the firmament it lighted,
Flashed unto the upper sky ;
And on moonless nights around him
Played a softer gentler ray,
Like the soft and silver moon beams
Changing darkness into day ;
But at morn so bright his radiance,
That the paler orb or sun,
Pacing though a sky of azure,
Scare with wonted lustre shone !

iii

Holy saints beheld in awe
Arjun with his bow unbent,—
"Is this Siva's self,"—they asked,
"On some Titan's death intent ;
Is he Indra or the Sun,
God of Fire who helps our rites,—
Strength like his no mortals own,
Faith like his no anchorites !"
But unlike the flaming Fire
All serene was Arjun's light,
And unlike the scorching Sun
Gentle was his holy might ;
Lost in doubt the holy saints
In their fear to Siva came,—
So all virtues come to Peace,
So all rites to Righteous Fame !

iv

Blinded by the Holy Ray,—
 By the God's effulgent Light,—
 Vain they sought with mortal eyes
 To discern his radiant might ;
 Till by hymns they humbly sought
 Him, the Lord of time and space,
 And from Siva's eye and front
 Flowed to them his godlike grace.
 Resting on his sacred bull
 Ashen arm of wondrous might,
 He,—by Uma sought and loved,—
 Stood upon the mountain's height ;
 Far from creatures of the earth
 Stood where snow-clad mountains tower,
 But the ocean, land, and sky
 Felt his presence and his power !
 Coiling serpents stretched their length
 Round the muscles of his feet,
 As upon broad-bosomed earth
 Rocky ranges cross and meet ;
 On his blue and ample throat
 Twining *Nagas* white as snow,
 Like the thread of twice-born men,
 Caught its dark tremulous glow !
 By his tresses partly hid
 Young moon's glistening crescent hung,
 And like Ganga's sparkling wave
 Silver radiance softly flung ;
 And he listened as the saints
 Hymns and holy lays addressed,
 Telling how a mortal's rites
 Filled the wide earth with unrest !

v

" Listen to us mighty Lord,
 How a man with Titan's might
 Quells the earth with righteous toil,
 Pales the sun with brighter light ;

Bow he wears and shining darts,
 Armour and a wond'rous blade,
 Yet in hermit's skin and bark,
 Peaceful toils the warrior dread !
 When he treads, the broad earth quakes,
 When he prays, the forests glow,
 Starry skies are hushed and still,
 And the breezes cease to blow ;
 When at morn he climbs the hill
 Stillness falls on earth and air, —
 What great task, what deed unknown
 May his lofty pride not dare ?
 If he seeks to rule the earth,
 Or destroy it in his ire,
 If he toils to win the sky,
 None may guess his purpose dire ;
 Thou alone must know it Lord,
 For no secret blinds thine eye,
 Thou dost know and thou canst save,
 Thou canst help and thou art nigh."

vi

Unto them then Siva answered
 In his accents full of grace, —
 Deep as voice of mighty ocean
 Sounding to the ends of space ;
 "Know ye, who with lofty penance
 Worships in Badrika's heath, —
 Earth-born man but part of VISHNU
 Who is Life and who is Death !
 And he toils in rites enduring
 Foes to conquer and to quell, —
 Foes whose dark deeds fill the wide earth,
 And whose crimes the heavens assail ;
 By the will of ancient BRAHMA
 Krishna took his human birth, —
 With brave Arjun, — to accomplish
 Heaven's high mandate on the earth !
 But the wily Titan Muka,
 Foe of bright gods of the sky,

Seeks to smite the pious Arjun,
Seeks to thwart our purpose high ;
But to slay the warrior-hermit
Openly to try were vain,
Muka wears the shape of wild-boar
His unrighteous end to gain !
I will take the form of hunter
Pierce the wild boar in the heart,—
Arjun is a valiant sportsman,
He will doubtless send his dart ;
Pale with fasts and rigid penance
Still he owns a wond'rous might,—
Ere the mortal wins my favour
He must prove his worth in fight !

vii

As the bright gods come,
Siva came disguised,—
Hunter's paint he wore,
Hunter's toil he prized ;
And with tendrils twined
Fell his shaggy hair,
Peacock's radiant plume
Decked his eye-brows fair ;
Bow and arrows keen
Glittered in his hand,
Like a lurid cloud
Siva led his band !
And his arméd host
Waited on his word,
And like hunters held
Bow and lance and sword ;
Sweeping through the woods,
Marching through the wold,
Filling earth with sounds
Marched the huntsmen bold !
Scream of bird and beast
Echoed through the land,
Woods and mountains quaked
At the forest band ;

Beasts and birds forgot
Hate and mutual strife,
Danger made them friends,
And their fear of life !
Chowris feign would fly
Startled by the yell,
But the bush and briar
Caught their flowing tail ;
Lion, king of woods,
Owned no dastard fear,
Marked the hunters pass
Calmly from his lair ;
Fish leaped from the lake,
Beasts stood on its shore,
Rills were stained by trees
Which the tusked tore ;
Buffaloes from woods
Broke through tangled trees,
Wild flowers with their scent
Filled the fragrant breeze ;
Splashing through the stream,
Dashing through the grain,
Wild beasts tore the woods
Like the summer's rain !
Past the forest wild,
Hunters came and stood,
Where the peaceful deer
Browsed in Arjun's wood ;
And they witnessed Muka
From a covert rise,
Tearing earth with tusks
In a boar's disguise ;
Leaving by the lake
All his armed force,
Siva all alone
Tracked the wild boar's course !

BOOK VI

Prayer and Blessing

A boar was killed, and a combat ensued between the rival huntsmen, Siva and Arjun, over the game. Siva was pleased with the valour and determination of the hermit-warrior, and gave him the celestial arms which he sought.

i

Pleased with Arjun's worth and valour,
 Grace of soul and strength of arm,
 Siva clasped dauntless mortal
 And assumed his godlike form ;
 Gentle rain from clouds descended,
 Fragrant blossoms fell from high,
 And a soft celestial music
 Floated from th' auspicious sky !
 Indra and the bright Immortals
 Viewed with joy the mortal's might,
 And their cars of light and lustre
 Gemmed the sky like stars at night ;
 Heavenly swans with sweet bills tinkling
 Drew the chariots through the air,
 Sailed across the sea of azure
 On their pinions soft and fair ;
 Softly, slowly, reverently,
 Grateful Arjun bent his head,
 And in pure and pious accents
 To the Great Immortal prayed.

ii

"Lord of Grace ! The World's Asylum !
 Whom by worship we attain,
 Saints have conquered Death's destruction,
 Shewed Thy path to gods and men ;
 Whoso seeks Thee not in worship,
 Shunned by dearest kith and kin,

Lives a life of vain illusion,
 Dies a death of woe and sin ;
 Whoso seeks Thee in affection,
 Breaks through ills that wait our birth,
 Finds in Thee his true salvation,
 Peace and bliss unknown on earth !
 Some are lured by worldly pleasures,
 Some for heaven's enjoyments sigh,—
 Save in Thee no true salvation
 Is there in the earth or sky ;
 For in Thee alone is refuge,
 And who leaves Thee dies in woe,—
 This is Law, and not Thy anger,
 Wrath nor passion dost Thou know !
 Thee we serve with tainted worship,
 And Thy form we darkly guess,—
 Even thus our soul's blind longings
 Have the power to heal and bless ;
 For illusions mock our vision,
 Shadow-like our actions flee,—
 He sees true who sees The Being
 He acts true who acts in Thee !
 Divers teachers often teach us
 Divers precepts wise and great,
 But Thy grace and blessing only
 From our bonds can liberate ;
 And to rid this world of troubles,
 Sin and sorrow, stress and storm,
 Various forms at will Thou wearest,
 Thou art Mercy—without form !”

iii

Arjun reverently
 Did his mercy crave,
 He unto the warrior
 Heavenly blessing gave ;
 And the gift of Siva
 With a radiant flame,
 As the sun to rain-cloud,
 Unto Arjun came !

All the gods assembled
Blessed the man of truth,
Gave him arms celestials
Spake unto the youth :
"Thou hast proved thee faithful,
Thou shalt win thy end,
To the man true-hearted
Gods their succour send !"
Thus they blessed and vanished,
Arjun came and stood
Once more by his brothers
In the Dwaita wood ;
And the good Yudhishtir
Blessed the emprise done,
For by truth and valour
Destiny is won !

ENGLISH WORKS

BY

R. C. DUTT ESQ., C.I.E.

1. **Great Epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata :** with 24 Superb photo-engravures in one magnificent volume.
Rs. 12-8.
 2. **Epics and Lays of Ancient India,** Rs. 5.
 3. **Economic History of British India,** Rs. 5-8.
 4. **Famines in India,** Rs. 4-8.
 5. **The Lake of Palms,** Rs. 3-0.
 6. **Civilization in Ancient India,** Popular Edition, Rs. 5.
 7. **A Brief History of Ancient & Modern Bengal,** cloth Ans. 12, half cloth Ans. 10.
 8. **The Literature of Bengal,** Rs. 3.
 9. **Rambles in India,** Rs. 2.
 10. **Three Years in Europe, 1898 to 1871** with accounts of visits to Europe in 1886 and 1893, New Edition, Illustrated. Rs. 3.
-

শ্রীরমেশচন্দ্র দত্ত কর্তৃক প্রণীত বা প্রকাশিত

বাঙ্গলা ও সংস্কৃত গ্রন্থসমূহ।

১। ঋগ্বেদ-সংহিতা, মূল সংস্কৃতে প্রকাশিত } নূতন সংস্করণ
ঐ ঐ বঙ্গ অনুবাদ ... } যন্ত্রস্থ।

২। হিন্দুশাস্ত্র, শাস্ত্রজ্ঞ পণ্ডিতগণ দ্বারা অনুদিত।

প্রথম খণ্ড—অর্থাৎ বেদ ; উপনিষদ ; শ্রোত্য গ্রন্থ ও ধর্ম সূত্র ;

মন্ত্র আদি ধর্মশাস্ত্র ও দর্শন। উত্তম কাপড়ে বাঁধাই ৫/-

দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড—অর্থাৎ রামায়ণ, মহাভারতাদি ; উত্তম কাপড়ে
বাঁধাই।

উপস্থাপন ; নূতন সংস্করণ।

৩। বঙ্গবিজ্ঞেতা,	কাপড়ে বাঁধাই	১৥০
৪। রাজপুত-জীবনসন্ধ্যা,	ঐ	১৥০
৫। মাধবীকঙ্কণ,	ঐ	১৥০
৬। মহারাষ্ট্র-জীবন-প্রজ্ঞাত,	ঐ	১৥০
৭। সংসার,	ঐ	১৥০
৮। সমাজ,	ঐ	১৥০

